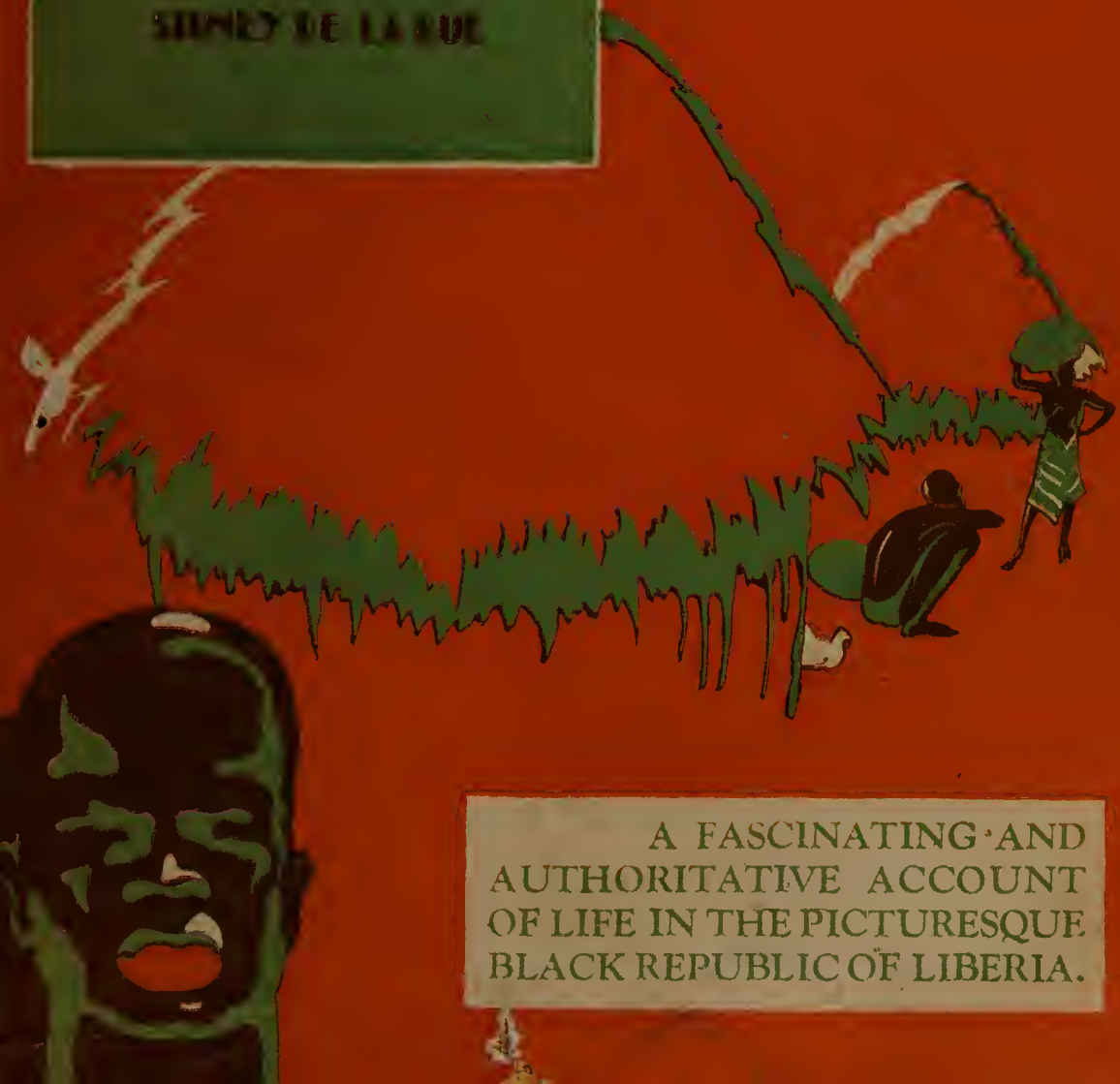
THE LAND OF THE PEPPER BIRD

STANLEY DE LA RUE



A FASCINATING AND AUTHORITATIVE ACCOUNT OF LIFE IN THE PICTURESQUE BLACK REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA.

The Land of the Pepper Bird

HERE at last is a book that presents a complete and accurate picture of a a country concerning which there is much general interest—the black Republic of Liberia on the west coast of Africa. Very little has been written about the picturesque land of the pepper bird, although Liberia is rapidly finding its place in the sun, and becoming increasingly important in the economic development of world trade. This volume will be a valuable addition to the literature which treats of strange lands and strange customs in a comprehensive manner, and which records information of genuine value to future researchers.

All phases of life in Liberia are discussed thoroughly, its flora and fauna, the customs of its people, its social and economic problems. There are colorful descriptions of the native life, humorous, breath-taking incidents. Particularly interesting are the chapters on native cults, superstitions, and the dread black magic.

Mr. de la Rue spent a number of years in Liberia in the official capacity of its Financial Adviser—a Presidential appointment. He is now Financial Adviser to the Republic of Haiti. As a trained observer, therefore, he has brought to these pages a narrative that is not only varied and entertaining, but soundly informative.

By Sidney de la Rue

4—
Tappi
Cavally R.
Sudi
IVORY COAST
R I A
Cavally R.
ss
Greensville
Setta Kru
Webbo
Garawe
Harpers
Palmas
LAURIAT CO.

A typical village scene in Liberia. Children of both sexes usually go naked.

The Land
of the
Pepper Bird

LIBERIA

by SIDNEY DE LA RUE

WITH 50 ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK : LONDON
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1930

THE LAND OF THE PEPPER BIRD
LIBERIA

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by
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Made in the United States of America

To

M'CITA

AND

THE COLONEL

FOREWORD

The Pepper Bird's mission in life is to wake up West Africa at sunrise, in which he is quite as efficient as any noise-making instrument man's genius has been able to devise. He is the original alarm clock. As all things have a meaning to the mind of Africa, long, long ago the reason for this morning clamour passed into the tribal folklore and mothers tell their wide-eyed children this legend of the Pepper Bird:

"When the sun drops behind the trees, Old Father Night steals through the 'softly softly trails' of the jungle, and gathers all his tired children in his arms. In that soft embrace, they rest content, secure from toil and trouble. Old Father Night comforts them with happy dreams that seem to have no end. But there is Father Day who claims these children also. As the sun rises with each new dawn, Mr. Pepper Bird perches on Old Father Night's shoulder, and tells him that he must return the people to Father Day. Old Father Night cannot bear to give up his people to the burdens and torment of Father Day,

so he holds his children tighter and pretends not to hear. Pepper Bird shrieks louder and louder:

"'Father Night, Father Night,—get up, here's Father Day.' He yells and calls until Old Father Night opens one eye, 'small small,' and sees Mr. Sun glaring at him; then he knows he cannot pretend any longer, and hands over his beloved African children to Father Day."

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THE LAND OF THE PEPPER BIRD
LIBERIA

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CHAPTER I

THE PLAYGROUND OF THE TRADES

THE West Coast of Africa begins at Marseilles.

It is only in geographies that continents have fixed boundaries and begin and end where they should. People have a lively way of carrying a continent about with them and dropping it wherever they see fit.

Marseilles is the gate through which Europe goes to Africa and Africa to Europe, and through it runs all the cross-currents of the Mediterranean. It is the despair of the tourist because it is not obvious. But its charms are no less potent because they must be sought for. In this also, it is the beginning of West Africa.

Marseilles was founded no one knows by whom or when, a trading post at the mouth of the River

Rhone. It harboured the first traders who went down to the sea in ships. The Phocæans came there and that great artery of modern commerce, the Cannebière, was once a rope walk where they made the rigging for their ships. As a Greek colony, it bore the name in the fifth century B. C. of Massilia. The Phœnicians, seeking tin in Britain, put in to Massilia for supplies as Cretan galleys had done before. Egyptian ships came and went, and today in the museum, a few stones, a mummy or two, bear proof of their coming. Carthaginians came, and these dark-faced lords of North-West Africa brought Tannit of the Sacred Triangle and set up her temple there. Then came Rome.

According to tradition, after Pontius Pilate left Judea, he was governor at Marseilles. Today, Rome's buildings are ruins, but her system of administration, the only successful Colonial Government ever maintained by an old world people, remains as a heritage to modern France.

After the Romans, the Vandals, the Saracens, and the Crusaders passed through Marseilles. Even St. Louis sailed from here to North Africa. Surely if there is a royal road to Africa it begins, it always has begun, at Marseilles.

The traveller first meets Africa on its streets. Black soldiers in high, yellow, visorless hats and

dust coloured felt-like uniforms. Black soldiers in blue with red fez; French officers in long white Arab capes lined with bright red; dark faces with high sharp noses and glittering arrogant eyes; still darker faces with flat noses and the tall stature of Senegal; queerly pitched voices and laughter; French mixed with African words and African mixed with French. Everywhere noise and movement and the sense of something not European.

Marseilles has many shops that speak of Africa: Brass Calabar bowls, small spidery human figures from Dahomey and la Côte d'Ivoire, woven grasses, odd bits of carved ivory and unknown woods from the Cameroons. Gun shops and outfitters displaying rifles, automatic pistols, ammunition, belts, canteens, tents protected against the sun by linings of green or red, metal air-tight and water-tight cases and trunks, hampers shaped for pack animals, mosquito boots, nets and medicine kits.

There are three or four cities in the world where one can outfit for the tropics. London is, of course, one of these, and Hamburg, Rotterdam, and Antwerp are others. But preparation in these cities is general rather than specific, for anywhere or everywhere, for pleasure as well as for business. In Marseilles, one prepares for a specific purpose and a particular place; the West Coast of Africa is differ-

ent from all other places because one does not so much prepare for it as against it, as against something sinister which lies in wait.

Time passes quickly in Marseilles and waiting for the boat is not unpleasant. The old port has a never failing attraction. A great stone-lined basin opens between the towers of a bridge of cables on which a platform moves back and forth. The harbour is filled with boats and ships of every rig, big and little, dirty and clean, old and new. Here are boats of fishermen and coastwise sailing ships with square rigged foremasts; boats with lateen sails, lug sails, sails of no name at all; passenger ships, tramps and yachts. Only in Constantinople can one see such a collection of the odds and ends of nautical science. On the quais are men of all nations and the noise and confusion of all languages. Stokers smeared with coal and men with the clean-washed brown of the sea mingle with porters in blue wearing wooden sabots.

On wooden tables, even on the cobbled wharves and streets, is displayed the greatest variety of sea food to be found anywhere; oysters, clams, squid, crabs, eels, mackerel, bass, sardines, ray, langouste, shrimps, mussels, sea urchins and violets—queer leathery things, yellow and pink inside, with a horrible briny taste—*fruit de la mer*.

Back of the old port is the old town whose existence is seldom suspected by the average visitor. Many of its narrow streets are only wide enough for foot traffic. They meander in and out between high stone buildings, through archways and up and down stone steps. Here are wine shops with heavy iron doors and no windows. In the dark interiors, rows of barrels and copper or brass half seen through the open doors reflect back the light; from others come snatches of song to the squeak of accordions and the sound of dice and talk. Little shops selling lace and bright cloth, others monkeys and parrots. The pungent aroma of roasting coffee, mixed with cheese, garlic, spilled wine and beer, hangs over all. African faces are here too, and one remembers that in Rome's day, the Numidian Legion had its headquarters in Algeria, and that Numidian cohorts had fought as far north as Britain. Black troops and dark faces were coming and going then, as now.

One day, my ship was at a quai in the New Harbour, and I went aboard. Among the many passengers, I found only one Englishman and no other Americans. The men appeared to be mostly French officers, colonists, employees in the post, railway and ports service of French West Africa. The Englishman and I drifted together, as Englishmen and

Americans do the world over, when they are few in number and in a foreign land. Ships for Africa are always late in leaving, and ours was no exception, so we watched the crowd. Many had come to say good-bye, and the wharf and the ship were filled with people. France is not generous with leave to her servants as is England. Most of them would be out from three to five years before they returned again. A group of young Frenchmen stood on the quai and sang "Companions of the Loire" in farewell to one of their comrades. There were many wet faces in the crowd. Some Africans in their native costumes, fluttering robes of blue and white, yelled and waved to friends in deck passage. Finally, came the last whistles, the rattle of winches, shouted orders and the bustle of last stowage of mail and cargo. Slowly we got under way. Marseilles was spread out behind us, bright, cheerful and busy in its amphitheatre of hills. Over all, Notre Dame de la Garde towered serenely against the blue sky, its golden statue shining in the sunlight, a last spot for the eye to focus on in farewell. Ahead was Africa.

Most of us disappeared into our staterooms unpacking and sorting out luggage, getting acquainted with room and bath stewards, or hunting up that important gentleman who assigns seats at table, ordering deck chairs and picking out the choicest

spot not already preempted. After all these things were disposed of, we had leisure to look at our fellow passengers.

There were no tourists on board. West Africa has neither time nor comforts for the sightseer. I suppose later the "Mungo Park's Tour" or the "Stanley and Livingstone Barbecue" will be widely advertised, but at this time not even billboards obscure or mar the Coast. Many traders, who with their wives were returning to their homes and business, had sought out their friends and were eagerly exchanging news. Peanut buyers going out for the crop gathered in a little group apart. New youngsters for the big firms or government offices regarded with respectful interest this or that well known Coaster as the men who had faced Africa and had won out were pointed out to them. Some day they, too, if they lived and were fit, might be of such company, capable, sure of themselves.

France has so large a part of Africa to police that her ships are always full of soldiers going somewhere. We had twenty or thirty officers with us, their faces browned and marked with sun, wind and sand. These included a group from Morocco en route to Brazzaville, cursing their luck, for it is a rotten post. There were also some of the Governor General's staff at Dakar; lucky people. Many of

the officers had with them their wives and children. Dry hair and thin sallow faces marked the women who had lived on the Coast before. Some of the older traders still affected the fan beard, high white collar and shabby black cutaway coat of the prosperous middle class of twenty years ago. They would cling to these until heat compelled them to change but just now they were all a little excited and walked and talked importantly. Everyone knew everyone else, either directly or through mutual friends, and in one way or another all had the same common interest—Africa.

It was a cheerful boat. News of the coast, of friends, politics, the peanut crop and the assignment of officers to new posts made the first evening on board a noisy, excited meeting of one big family gathered together after the holidays. By the next evening, we had settled down to our long journey. Some of us would remain on board until Libreville, more than three weeks away. So long is the coast.

On our boat sailing south this trip, much of the talk was of the development into citizens of France of African natives in French territory, for the benefit not only of the African France that is to be, but for the benefit of France as a whole. A black French lieutenant sat at table between two white officers, and no apparent distinction was made. A Senegalese

girl mingled with the white French on board, both men and women. She was French. Our boat was full of children from babies in arms to boys and girls returning from school; race suicide is no part of the French Colonial system in West Africa. The English do not take their children to West Africa; Englishmen and the few women who go to the Coast are going away from home, out of their country. Frenchmen in colonial service have not that feeling. They are working for their government and whether the post is in Africa or Indo China, they take France and their families along. Many, retired after years of service, cling to the land that has held them so long; and in many instances plantations, stores, hotels and docks are managed and run by these ex-officials. They are still French in a Dominion of France.

The following evening we were off the shore of Spain. The sea was calm, the sky overcast with heavy dark clouds. The high rugged mountains that form the Spanish coast were blue-black against the darkening sky. Just as the sun reached the horizon, a long level beam of ruddy light broke through the clouds, and striking across the sea to the distant shore was reflected back to us from the windows of a village in squares of fire. Suddenly, a huge spot of rainbow colour formed in a patch of mist, so

bright and beautiful that all crowded along the rail to see it, then slowly it faded, and as the darkness gathered, there came from the after well deck the sound of harp and drum, the music of Africa.

Our native passengers were housed below without any comforts or attention. They had brought their own bedding and would do their own cooking. Later they would be shielded from sun and rain by a heavy tarpaulin fastened tentlike to a derrick boom. Tonight several had gotten out musical instruments and were playing while two men and some children danced. The native passengers not taking part in the entertainment sat around the performers on huge shapeless bundles of bedding, food bags, mats and miscellaneous gear. Looking down from the promenade deck I forgot the ship. The checkered shadows of the ropes and spars and the dark masses of the winches became the lights and shadows of the African bush in the glow of a campfire, and there about the musicians was the dusky crowd of a native village swayed by the throb of a tom-tom. Some French soldiers attached to the tropical service came out and joined them, producing mandolins. Their music was African too. Seemingly they knew the tunes and could feel the rhythm as well as did the natives.

I had hoped to see some of the Foreign Legion on

board, but as our ship was to miss Casablanca this trip and go straight on to Dakar, none were with us. Casablanca is the farthest south of this arm of the French service.

Gibraltar in the morning. I got up early to see it. I always get up to see Gibraltar. Once I remember getting up at one o'clock at night to see it. That time it was cold and windy and a searchlight was playing. It looked businesslike. This morning it was rather disappointing from the eastern side. I remembered a new novel I had been reading wherein one of the characters expresses his surprise that the Prudential sign is not there. I told my English friend about it, but he very earnestly assured me that it would not have been allowed. With that I went to breakfast.

Usually going down the West coast ships touch at the Canary Islands either at Santa Cruz de Teneriffe or Santa Cruz de la Luz, the port of Las Palmas, and if one is lucky, the beautiful peak of Teneriffe hanging snow-clad in the sky is the one attraction of an otherwise rather drab and dusty place; but the peak is seldom visible through the clouds.

If one has time for an all day trip to the interior one can see the flowers of La Laguna and the plantations and botanical gardens of Orataba. The de-

composed volcanic ash which forms the soil of the narrow valleys is inexhaustibly fertile and agriculture is highly profitable wherever water is available. Unfortunately this is very scarce and expensive so that a large part of the province must remain uncultivated. Back of Las Palmas are the old Troglodite colonies. This curious race of people have inhabited since Paleolithic times their little rooms excavated in the soft rock of the steep hillsides.

This run we were far to the eastward and had a rare view of the Saharan Coast north of Cape Blanco. Very few ships plot their courses sufficiently close to this shore for passengers to see it, so unless one travels on the Spanish Line to the Rio de Oro, it is almost never seen. It was odd to be riding on a ship observing the Sahara Desert from a comfortable deck chair, yet that was our good fortune. The coast line is low and even, with here and there a small indentation hardly large enough to be called a bay. The shore line rises abruptly where the waves have cut a little bluff in the reddish soil, while back of that as far as the eye can reach, the desert rolls away, seemingly endless mounds of red sand. In many places the Sahara Desert disappoints the traveller. The bare rocks, hard gravel and stony hills here and there covered with camel scrub, are not unlike some of our western deserts

covered with sagebush. The high dunes of moving sand and the picturesque silhouettes of camels exist in reality in few places. But this view we had of the Western Sahara was exactly what I had always wanted it to be.

Some "pilote boats" of Canary Island fishermen were plying about. These men land and dry their catches on the sand and tramp steamers frequently stop and trade gin, tobacco, ship's bread and salt beef for their fresh fish. In the afternoon we lost the coast but later picked up the lighthouse on Cape Blanco. This desert coast seemed our first real view of Africa as the forest-clad mountains of the north coast which we saw at Gibraltar are much like Europe.

Life on a long voyage like ours differs from the quick passage between Europe and America travellers know nowadays. Everyone on a West African ship knows everyone else and talks shop and the latest gossip. Regular bridge players make up their tables and play every day and every night. Woe betide the partner who keeps the others waiting or tries to dodge a session. He is treated as an ill mannered, guilty person and usually charged with the drinks. No outsider dares to occupy the chairs or tables appropriated by the players. There are

certain traditions of the Coast that old Coasters never break and this is one of them.

On a French boat the bar is really the social hall for men, women and children. On a British boat it is a bar, ladies not allowed. On our boat this trip we spent all the time we liked in the big comfortable room with drinks at two francs fifty instead of a shilling, and syrups, Amer Picon, and vermouth took the place of cocktails and whisky for most of the passengers. Here the officers played their endless games of French backgammon and dominoes; great excitement attended the results.

Two Colonial Governors were on board and their solemn pacing the deck gave warning to all that weighty things were at hand. A governor on that coast is and acts like an old time feudal lord. The high, the middle and the low justice is no joke to the people over whom he rules.

The stretch of sea between the Canary Islands and Capes Blanco and Verde is the playground of the trades. Always blowing, part of the year northward, part of the year southward, travellers either find their ships being helped or hindered, bucking into the waves with flying clouds of spray about the bows, or running easily with a long roll to the following sea. Kipling's description contains it all, the sight, the sound, and the feel of it.

Who hath desired the sea?—the immense and contemptuous surges?
The shudder, the stumble, the swerve, as the star-stabbing bowsprit emerges?
The orderly clouds of the Trades, and the ridged, roaring sapphire thereunder—
Unheralded cliff-haunting flaws and the headsails' low volleying thunder,
His Sea in no wonder the same—His Sea and the same through each wonder.

Now we were coming to the land of the red ray and passengers appeared on deck with sun helmets. Our friends the traders, in their hot cutaway coats and black beards, were rather startling in khaki helmets. It was funny to notice the ease with which the children became accustomed to keeping theirs on. It soon becomes second nature, however, and after a short time one never has to be reminded, "put your helmet on". The question of helmet or no helmet is a much debated one every trip, but no matter how the argument went in the smoke room the evening before, everyone is sure to turn out the next morning wearing his helmet. It is true, however, that people who have been long accustomed to tropical sun, or others who for some peculiar reason have a greater resistance to the red rays, can bear exposure without the protection of a helmet and suffer no ill effects. On the other hand, deaths,

cases of insanity, or other serious injuries are constantly reported, and few are daring enough to try it unnecessarily.

Insulation, as sunstroke is called on the Coast, is different from sunstroke in northern latitudes and is not a question of temperature. The danger is quite as great on a cloudy day as on a sunny one, and although West Africa is reasonably chilly during the rainy season, when the temperature drops below seventy, sunstroke is reported to be quite as frequent then as in the "drys", when the temperature is well above ninety.

Africa is a red land. The prevailing colour of the soil is red, and the clouds of fine red dust from the Sahara Desert floating miles high in the air act as a light screen which cuts down the violet end of the spectrum but permits the red ray to penetrate with increased intensity. Measuring the light with a meter for photography I have found that after ten o'clock in the morning its photographic value steadily decreases, and while a day may be bright and sunny from ten on, I have consistently found only poor photographic light until nearly four o'clock in the afternoon when the meter would again indicate a better condition. I have always had to give longer exposures or wider apertures in taking photographs

on the West Coast in sunlight than one would think of giving anywhere else. It is likely that this increase in red light is responsible for the danger of insulation.

CHAPTER II

UNDER THE RED RAY

THE night before Dakar was given to festivity, a masquerade and impromptu concert. The French officials did not mask, as their regulations forbid it, but all the other passengers did their best and some of the costumes were very good indeed. The Senegalese girl played and sang and was greatly applauded. A special supper was served by the ship and we all went to bed feeling our arrival on the morrow had been properly anticipated.

Dakar nestles under the mountain known as Cape Verde. It is the most westerly point of the continent of Africa. Black and red, steep, rocky cliffs and broken precipitous islets mark the coast about the cape and navigation into the harbour must have been difficult if not frequently impossible in the days of sail. Today the course is indicated by a lighthouse on Cape Verde, harbour marks and channel buoys so that ships enter safely by day or night.

As our ship passed through the islets and ap-

Dakar has one of the few good harbours in West Africa.

Santa Cruz de la Luz, the port of Las Palmas.

proached the rocky cliffs of the coast we came abreast of Goree. Tradition tells of a Phœnician trading post here in ancient days. Goree is only a few acres in extent, with one half high, rocky and mesa-shaped facing the sea, and the landward side low with a safe beach that must have made it an ideal place for the ancient sailors to draw up their boats for repairs. Originally the French used it for Government buildings and as a fort, as their long gone predecessors had done. Today it is largely abandoned for such purposes, as it is too far from the city of Dakar for quick communication.

Dakar has one of the few good harbours in West Africa. Sierra Leone has Freetown and the Gold Coast Takoradi and after that nothing until Lagos in Nigeria. If one remembers the geologic conditions this is easily understood because Africa, and especially West Africa, represents one of the oldest land masses. It is so old that the mountains in most places have been worn down by erosion until only old Plutonic rocks, the ribs of the mountains of ancient times, are left. There is not even limestone to be had, and nothing as recent as coal deposits have been found. This long exposure to erosion has flattened the land and built long bars and beaches. The shore lines in many places are edged by lagoons and the river mouths by long, dangerous bars. There

are only two or three patches of hills as at Freetown, Cape Mount, Monrovia and one or two other places, until one gets considerably back from the coast. Even then there are no highlands to speak of until one gets east and south as far as Nigeria, where the beginning of a high plateau turns the Niger River out towards the sea, and thus stops its long course from west to east. Here again are found mud and sand bars and the delta of the Niger has covered up and built out for many miles the old shore line.

The harbour at Dakar has been improved and supplied with modern facilities and is unique in being, I believe, the only place in the world especially equipped for handling peanuts. In the season ships are loaded with peanuts by machinery and it is not an unusual sight to see a dozen ships at a time awaiting their cargo of nuts. Huge mounds of nuts as big as a city block amaze the visitor, and I for one had no idea there were so many peanuts in the world as I saw collected for shipment there.

In Dakar one is in France, although it seemed a dusty, rather uninteresting place until I had seen the other cities of the Coast. After that it was a metropolis. Carriages, taxicabs, barber shops with white barbers, cafés that looked cool and clean, good hotels or good by comparison, structural steel build-

ings, water and sewage, public parks and a railroad station. It all seemed positively luxurious.

France has built Dakar as a permanent capital of French West Africa. The administration buildings are constructed of hollow tile, concrete, brick and stucco. The law courts are of the same construction with wide, arched, upper verandas to shade the rooms from the sun. Indeed the whole city is of brick, hollow tile and concrete with a large proportion of tile roofs. It is this permanence and solidity of construction that contrasts Dakar with the rest of West Africa, where corrugated iron, especially rusty corrugated iron, greets one from every side. All along the coast corrugated iron is the accepted roofing material and it is frequently used for siding as well. It is almost never painted. After a few years it begins to rust and the shabby, down at the heel appearance of most of the Coast is caused by this hideous construction. I soon learned to loathe it and as laundry work is done with rain water caught from those rusty roofs, the rust spots on white clothes are constant reminders.

Dakar is connected with Europe by air mail and its four day schedule to France speaks louder than words for the French administration's grasp of the importance of quick communication. It is the last African port of call for passenger liners making the

South American run. Soon it will be a great air port and the German-Spanish-South American dirigibles will call there en route to Brazil and the Argentine. Two lines of railroad run out from Dakar, one to St. Louis at the mouth of the Senegal River to the northward, the other a long fourteen hundred kilometres north and east to Bameko on the Niger.

I went into a barber shop and was treated by a gentleman with a huge, black, glossy beard spread fanwise from his chin to his belt. First he would snip a bit and comb my head, then he would comb his beard, and so after a while my hair was cut and his beard combed. As a special treat he took me into the yard to show me a grapevine with beautiful clusters of purple grapes on it. He said he had brought the cutting from France eight years before, and I believe it is the only grapevine in West Africa that bears fruit.

Bameko is a rapidly growing city and the beginning of navigation for shallow-draft river steamers. It is from here one takes a steamer for Timbuktu. It is the centre point of the network of wireless France has established throughout West Africa and it is through this station that direct communication is constantly maintained with France. A few years ago Tuaregs and other Arab raiders were accustomed to come down from the desert into

the agricultural country of the southern Soudan, burning and stealing and carrying off slaves. The establishment of little forts equipped with wireless soon made this an unprofitable occupation for the raiders. These forts were established near water sources and desert routes to which the raiders were obliged to come, and were too strong to be taken by assault. When they were first established the raiders simply passed around them but later when each fort was equipped with wireless and news of the coming raid could be sent ahead, raiding became a different matter from the easy plunder of the earlier days. Mobile troops met the raiders on every advance and today this sort of thing has been broken up and the agriculturists are prospering.

The railroad line from Dakar to St. Louis is unique in that it is the only West African railroad that really pays. One or two are said to pay expenses without state aid, but the St. Louis line has been returning such profits to its stockholders that I hesitate to give the reported figures.

To readers in developed Northern and Western lands railroads and trains may seem queer things to enthuse over, but to the man from the odd backwaters they mean life, cafés, ice, pretty girls, and civilization. I remember once I had been four years away from such things as are everyday sights to

most of our world, and I stayed on a street corner for an entire morning enjoying the passing of the trams and motor cars.

Peanuts are more important than any other Senegalese export today but they are likely to be rivalled by cotton in the future. American experts in the employ of the French Government cooperating with French agricultural officials have been doing wonders to cross a long staple variety with the indigenous cotton of West Africa and some of their results have been astonishingly successful. In passing it is interesting to note that the British Nigerian Government has done much the same in their part of the Niger Valley and year by year the export of baled cotton from Lagos has increased. It may well be expected that as this cotton area develops, much of the world's future cotton will come from West Africa.

In Dakar American business is conspicuous by its absence, as it is on most of the coast. There is one American lumber company and one American steamship line office. The first was managed by a Swede and the other by an Englishman. American business is carried on by French, English, or Dutch firms. A few years ago American cotton machinery needed for Bameko was bought through

England as no one knew how to get it direct from America.

Automobiles are plentiful but there are few of American make. Roads are reasonably good and extend for hundreds of miles and eventually will form a network connecting all of the French West African colonies. The plan has been adopted of building vehicular roads in the hinterland as feeder lines to the railroads and thus each interior station becomes the centre of a patch of radiating automobile roads.

At Dakar I changed ships and continued on an English boat. Leaving at eleven o'clock at night our ship made Bathurst, the capital and port of British Gambia, at seven the next morning. This little colony is the oldest British colony in West Africa and in spite of its diminutive size it is an important place for the shipment of peanuts. Bathurst is a pretty little town built on a low lying, sandy shore a mile or more back from the sea at the mouth of the Gambia River. Shaded by great cotton trees and palms, the few bungalows and warehouses look cool, comfortable and alluring. Most of its residents are extraordinarily proud of their sleepy little port, and one of their officials once said to me, "My dear fellow, I assure you this is really the House of Lords of West Africa."

Our boat got itself arrested at Bathurst as someone reported to the Captain that arms and ammunition were in possession of the crew, who purposed peddling them to natives on the coast. He notified the authorities ashore and we were surprised at the sudden appearance on board of a number of the Gambia police in charge of two white officers. A thorough search was made, and the arms, mostly pistols and ammunition, were confiscated and some of our crew found themselves unexpectedly going ashore. The forbidden munitions had been bought at Hamburg and would have been an exceedingly profitable piece of business if they had been sold as intended. The restriction on the sale of ammunition and arms to natives seems rather silly as most of them have some sort of firearms and many know how to manufacture powder. Further, Africa is too big to blockade and all this amounts to is to put the price up on such articles and make one more law to be broken.

Below the British Gambia lies Portuguese Gambia. Here it is difficult to tell where the sea ends and the coast begins for hidden sand banks extend out into the sea for miles and ships almost crawl their way in with the lead line kept going for hours. When trees and vegetation at last appear ahead it is only a deception of a coast for this vegetation is

growing on islets where miles of bars of sand and mud have caught and held a few bushes and trees. The colour of the sea and the colour of the soil are the same, so much mud is carried down by the estuary and stirred up by the tides. One island had a few cotton trees larger than the rest. There, with a sigh of relief, our captain got his pilot. Lighthouses are few and far between on the coast and perhaps one here would not be of much service anyhow; but an old rusty lantern hung on the branch of a tree does not seem sufficient light for a pilot anchorage. When we proceeded with the incoming tide and saw several channel buoys high and dry on the mud flats, the captain complained to me that once or twice those buoys, being temporarily in correct position, had very nearly caused him to run aground.

For forty miles we carefully made our way up a gradually narrowing estuary between low mud banks and mangrove swamps. Here and there we passed an open grassy space, but almost never any sign of human habitation, only monotonous muddy water and dull, brownish green shore.

At last we came to Bissao. Still so wide was the estuary that our ship of eight thousand tons turned under her own power to face the incoming tide and dropped anchor off the wharf. In fact we stopped well away from the wharf for that spidery, con-

crete affair would have crumbled if a ship our size had touched it. We had the Governor's family aboard and the official launch came off to take them ashore in state. This launch was interesting. A sort of park bench occupied the foredeck, the gorgeously uniformed occupants of which faced forward. Aft the pilot house was an open engine space with a black engineer. The engine was one of those weird, old semi-diesels that had to have its heat increased by warming up the top of the cylinders with bunches of burning oily waste. About every twenty feet the engine back fired and then the occupants of the park bench were jerked forwards and backwards, their hands, plumes, swords and feet all moving together in perfect time. Our ship's crew and passengers were so nearly helpless with laughter that when the launch finally reached our side no one thought of throwing them a line.

There are only two or three ports in West Africa where ships go alongside of the wharves. Most of them lie far out and cargo is discharged into lighters or surfboats to be ultimately landed in shallow bays or beached through high pounding surf. In Bissao we used lighters and the passengers went ashore to escape the noise of the winches.

This town was established in the sixteenth century and between it and the water was a wide bank

of slimy mud which had been accumulating and perfecting its stench ever since that date. The streets were fairly clean, possibly because the rows of vultures seated on the roof tops were personally interested.

A little way back from the waterside I found the old fort. Its high stone walls, parapets and moat, with a great arched doorway opening on the drawbridge, did not belong to Africa. It is still used and only a few years ago the tribesmen revolted and then for several weeks this fort was the one refuge about whose walls wild savages danced with heads on their spears.

The postmaster sold some old stamps engraved with the portrait of the king of Portugal which he surcharged and cancelled with the stamp of the republic, at the same time entertaining us with stories of game and hunting in the near vicinity. He alleged that he had seen both giraffe and ostrich a little ways up the river. Both of these are unusual on the West Coast, but although I have never seen giraffe there, I have seen ostrich and photographed them.

Our next port was Conakry, the capital of French Guinea, situated in the beginning of the rain belt and consequently a thriving business has developed in the supplying of fruit to Dakar. In the near vicinity Frenchmen are creating plantations of rice,

bananas, oranges and other tropical fruit and its agricultural experimental station is giving splendid assistance not only to colonists, but also to the native farmers. Conakry is hidden away amid palms and in its parks is such an unusual variety of tropical flowers and trees that it reminds one of a botanical garden. There are statues, fountains, and long shady avenues of palms. It is the prettiest city on the West Coast.

Two days south-east we came to Sierra Leone, Lion Mountain. It is so called because of the thunder storms continually growling in that group of little mountains. At the foot of the hills is Freetown, built along the bench at the edge of the sea, and shut off from all but sea breeze, it is one of the hottest places I know of in the afternoon. It has a good natural harbour protected by sand banks or bars to the westward and a rocky cape to the south-east. The white residents have built their bungalows and the barracks for troops up on the hills back from the town. Here is the end of the railroad that wanders back for two days to the town of Pendembu. Freetown is a coaling station and port of call for all West Africa steamship lines, and the place from which many ships take their deck labour for work on down the coast. Rice, ginger, palm oil and nuts are loaded in ships at anchor from huge lighters and

"I have seen ostrich" and photographed them although they are rare on the west coast of Africa.

Providence Island—the Plymouth Rock of the first Liberian settlers.

when we tired of watching the loading of one or the discharging of another there were bumboats with everything in the world for sale from Indian ivory to tinned chocolate and the woven baskets for which Freetown is famous.

The beggar is not limited to the streets of Freetown, he comes out to meet all ships. In a tiny paper-thin dugout just wide enough to squeeze into, a weird figure dressed in a celluloid collar and somebody's cast-off high silk hat, but otherwise innocent of clothing, approached our ship and hung about first on this side and then on that. It was a considerable feat to keep afloat as every little wave sloshed over the narrow stern but our friend's bare heels kicked vigorously and splashed the water out while his hands were used as paddles to manœuvre his diminutive craft. Sometime, somewhere, he had attended a mission for he saluted the passengers along the rail in English: "Good mornin', God bless you. I beg you one shillin' "; catching someone's eye and singling out a prospect, "Good mornin', Sah! Welcome, Sah, you go dash me?" Then in a raucous voice,

"Nearer my God to thee, nearer to thee,
Yes we have no bananas,
Even in my dreams I'd be,
We have no bananas today."

This would be varied a while with, "Will there be any stars in my crown", and when finally someone tossed down a silver coin, over he would go like a flash, diving and bringing up the money, catching his canoe, uprighting it and climbing in over the stern, picking up his floating hat, kicking out the water from his boat and, "Thank you, Sah, my children go chop tonight, praise the Lord! Bless you, Sah, I beg you trow me one shillin' ", and so on all over again, never missing a coin as one after another, amused by his entertainment, threw him money.

Freetown's street scenes serve well to contrast the British and French systems in West Africa. In Dakar people on the streets were going somewhere, doing something. The natives were respectful and self-respecting. In Freetown one immediately becomes conscious of beggars, loafers and insolence. I was told by ships' officers that not until Freetown is reached do they have any difficulties with Africans. Here begins the native anti-white newspapers freely disseminating anti-British propaganda; and the assertion of superiority of the half-educated native with a cultivated appetite and little earning capacity. Here is possibly a restive people needing a firm hand. No longer do you find the type of African who looks you in the face and says, "Je suis Français." Never

do these people claim to be British. "I am Sierra Leone, Sah", is the almost invariable answer. Not that there are not good people among them. There most certainly are: doctors, trusted clerks and business men. I am speaking of the mass of the population of Freetown and of low-class "civilized" townspeople as distinguished from the upper class and tribesmen of Sierra Leone; of those in transition who seemed to have acquired a smattering of education without a sense of responsibility or self-respect.

I have always been impressed with the dignity and the unconscious poise of the so-called uncivilized natives. To my mind it is perfectly clear that the African of the West Coast has evolved a system of life that permits him to develop his natural dignity and self-assurance as long as he remains a part of his clan and tribe, but far too often when he leaves his clan and begins to turn to foreign civilization and education, he loses his dignity and his pleasing natural poise becomes impertinence.

Sierra Leone is not a pleasant place to live in and I do not believe any British official ever settled down there after his period of service as I know Frenchmen have at Conakry, Dakar, Bameko and other places. It is not and never will be British in the same sense that French territories in West Africa are French.

East of Freetown are the Saint Anne Shoals, extending for many miles out from the coast and only penetrated by narrow winding channels. Few of the larger freight ships dare risk themselves in these dangerous waters so that our course was far out from land and the lead line was kept going.

Anywhere south of Dakar one may expect to meet a typical West African sea. The Coast is peculiar in that there are rarely sea storms. Sometimes there will not be a storm which causes rough water for many months and the frequent thunder storms at the beginning and again at the end of the rainy season do not appear to be of sufficient duration to have much effect on the sea. In the wet season the warm rain pours down from the low-hanging clouds in a steady, easy, falling stream with little or no wind, just coming down straight as if it were running out of a great faucet. There is always a long roll to this sea and the surf on the West Coast beaches is high and strong, but beyond the surf the water flattens down to a long roll with an oily, polished surface without a ripple.

The West African sky shines with a light like polished steel with something coppery in it, and in the rains this steely light darkens, but even when it is not raining the Harmattan cuts down the visibility so that it is a rare thing to have a wide, clear

view. Always on this kind of a sea there is a sense of unusual quiet as if one were moving down a river or across the surface of a lake and one misses the sound and shock of waves. There is only the vibration of the engines and the purr of the quiet waters disturbed by the passage of the ship. The dull steely reddish light coming through the haze is reflected back from the water as from a clouded mirror. It looks unpleasant and one feels shut in. If one leans back against the deck rail a little prickling sensation on the back of the neck warns you to put on a helmet. Red rays do not have to be imagined here.

The Saint Anne Shoals is the gathering place for great schools of fish and as our ship passed along the outer edge great circles on the surface of the smooth water were caused by millions of leaping fish. Several times we saw three or four of these big schools at the same time. Some day this may become a new fishing ground for the world's supply.

These great shoals were built by several rivers that flow into the sea from this part of the coast, the most important of which is the Sherboro River on which is the old town of Sherboro, still a port of call for small freighters. To me the most interesting thing about Sherboro is the story related in "Marvelous Narratives", a writing ascribed to Aristotle reporting as the ultimate south of a Cartha-

ginian expedition headed by one Hanno in the fifth century, B. C., an island containing a lake in which is another island. Such an island is found here and it is the only island of this description known on the West Coast.

The last port of Sierra Leone is Mano Saleje at the mouth of the Mano River, behind a long and dangerous bar. When the tides are high and the river strong the surf here makes landing impossible and freight ships frequently lie for three to four days waiting for quiet water to allow communication with the shore. In fair weather surfboats land on the bar and transship their cargo to other boats on the opposite side, which in turn convey it to the town across the river. Eastwards of this river is the Republic of Liberia.

The first port of Liberia at which steamers stop is known as Cape Mount, although the name of the town is really Robertsport. Here again, as at Freetown, a few little mountains form a landmark and break the monotony of the low coast line. Big passenger ships do not stop here and only freight boats twice a month disturb the rest of its customs officers. These mountain tops are inhabited by large colonies of chimpanzees called "babus" by the local residents, and because of fear of them few ever climb the summits.

Robertsport is best known as the headquarters of the Episcopal Mission which has maintained several schools in this vicinity for half a century. Near it is the little Vai village of Sugeree built on the edge of a brackish lake where the village priest will call out for the visitor's benefit an unbelievably old and hideous crocodile who, waddling confidently forward, opens his mouth to receive a live chicken and to have his thirst quenched with a bottle of gin. This crocodile is believed to be the guardian spirit of the village and the natives will tell you that only friendly crocodiles are allowed by him to inhabit the nearby waters in which they and their children bathe, swim and play without fear. I was told that some years ago, when especially high water permitted crocodiles from another stream to come into the lake, the guardian spirit killed them and dragged them out for the villagers to see.

Thirty-five miles southeastward is the port of Monrovia, the capital of the republic, and here the ships find the first real lighthouse south of Dakar, for the Government light on Cape Mesurado has a rated visibility of twenty-two miles and has been reported as being seen for distances up to thirty miles. It is an important light for here ships change their course as they round this point of Africa. Monrovia lies on the southerly side of a bay formed by the

high point of rocks known as Cape Mesurado. From the anchorage one gets the pleasant impression of white houses with pillars, arches and large upper verandas, all half hidden by trees and palms. The ships anchor a mile or two out from the beach and the Customs boat comes off from an inner lagoon, which is the small boat harbour. An American gets a little thrill of surprise from the first glimpse of the flag flying at the stern of the Customs boat, because the flag of Liberia is in red and white stripes with a blue field in the upper corner on which is a single white star, and from a distance it looks very much like an American flag. At this port one meets in the Customs boat the first good example of the thirty-five foot surfboats which are commonly used along the West Coast from the ports of Sierra Leone to the Congo. This boat is manned by a crew of eleven men using fourteen-foot oars, and in bad weather it is steered by a long heavy oar. For fair weather it has a rudder.

At Monrovia between the inner harbour and the bay there is a dangerous short bar which has taken its toll in lives more than once. When the tide is low there is only six feet of water on this bar and the waves are so high that as the surfboat comes out it is frequently thrown straight up in the air; many times the rudder has been smashed on the

bottom. When there is a high sea breaking I know of no more exciting sport than shooting this bar on the crest of a high wave in a welter of flying foam. The yelling boatmen hold their oars straight in the air and bring them down with magnificent precision as soon as the boat drops into the trough of the wave. Then the lives of those in the boat depend on the skill of the head man. His muscles swell and strain, his big, bare toes grasp a purchase, and the great sixteen-foot oar bends like a whip under his strength as he holds the boat steady against the force of the wave. The slightest mistake and the boat and all in it would be rolled over and pounded and broken by the waves. Coming in on a giant roller this way is called a "badoe" by the Monrovians.

Sometimes, when the swell is particularly high at this anchorage, and at other ports more generally, the "mammy chair" is used for disembarking passengers. This is a contrivance of wood and iron holding four or five passengers, shaped something like a garden swing, which is swung from the deck to the surfboats by the use of a derrick, and unless it is accurately handled so as to drop into the waiting boats, a sudden roll may find the passengers in it being dipped into the waves like a basket of fish.

Liberia is the only republic on the continent of Africa and under their self-government the people

there have developed into a very different type from those in other parts of the Coast. Their story has never been written and the blue misty hills that are Cape Mount and Cape Mesurado are all that the big liners see as they pass. Passengers on the Calabar and Lagos Express see but little more for the ships anchor for too short a time for passengers to go ashore. There it lies veiled by the copper haze of the Harmattan or masked in the mists and cloud shadows of the rains—far off, different, not a white land. Through the years strange stories and traders' tales about this country have come to be believed as true and these and dry statistics have masked the life and struggle of its hundred years of existence as the mists and cloud shadows mask and hide its form.

From the rail I watched the Customs boat come across the bay to meet me. Back of it sprawled the quaint little city of Monrovia. A few of the big white houses were visible through the haze. The palm trees along the shore melted into the jungle—the jungle into Africa, and over it all glowed the copper haze of the Harmattan. As the Customs boat came alongside and I received the smiling greeting of its officers and the broad grin of welcome of Weah, the big six-foot-four head boatman, I was glad to be back in West Africa again.

CHAPTER III

THE LAND OF THE PEPPER BIRD

Cape Mesurado is a high rocky point jutting out half a mile or so into the Atlantic Ocean. Precipitous cliffs face the sea, their summits covered with vegetation stunted by the salt sea wind, and around them the currents swirl and twist, and the surf throws up huge columns of spray as the waves dash against the rocks. To the eastward and northwestward, the coast falls away in long lines of sandy beach. It was here that the first settlers came, and the old cannon lying about in the bushes and grasses tell the story of their hopes and dangers. Here Roberts, the first president, is reputed to have walked and planned for the nation that was to be, and it is here that the first lightouse was built.

There is a magnificent view across the sea to the west, and sometimes the Rayon Vert, that mysterious green light due to refraction, shows as it lingers for a few moments at sunset. Often the refraction is so great that the sun appears not as a circle, but

a great red ovoid as it touches the horizon. From here, too, is best seen the double sunset, as the piled up cloud-masses of green and gold, or red, buff and violet, in the west are duplicated by still brighter and more glorious colour effects in the eastern sky; and the whole African Coast and the sea is bathed in the reddish light. Far below, the fishing fleet of sailing canoes comes winging homeward before the evening breeze, and a few minutes after the sun's disk has disappeared, night follows, and the stars come out. Then the great light above one's head starts its four revolving beams of greeting and warning to the ships far out at sea.

Darkness comes quickly in Liberia. Because it is so near the Equator, the days vary but little in length throughout the year. The sun rises at about six o'clock in the morning, and sets at about six o'clock in the evening, and until lately, sun time was sufficiently correct to meet the requirements of the residents there. Then an enterprising but misguided official, imbued with the necessity of Western time accuracy, tried to establish Greenwich time; and so by his suggestion it came about that a cannon on the cape was ordered fired at twelve o'clock noon every day—official "gun time". Time has never really bothered the African mind, and one is almost inclined to hope it never will. The soldiers in charge

The big house in Monrovia where the author lived.

From the veranda toward the east.

of the gun were provided with an old rusty alarm clock, which had long since lost its ambition to run for more than an hour or so at a stretch. Every morning they set their clock by Greenwich time; but by noon, the clock had lost at least half an hour, or more frequently, it had stopped. Sometimes, if they noticed it was not running, they rewound it and set it forward to where they thought it ought to be. "Gun time", therefore, became anything from half-past eleven to quarter to one, and as the change always came at noon—when the adjustment in time was made in the offices—the working population found, to their delight, that, in practice, it worked out to give them a half hour more leisure for their midday rest than under the old, inaccurate system of the sun. "Gun time" was deservedly popular. Invitations to dinners and afternoon parties among the foreign residents thus came to bear the inscription, "gun time" or "sun time".

How little the people realized the meaning and importance of correct time was shown in an amusing way one day at the new Government Radio Station. When the station was being set up and after communication with the United States had been established by its first apparatus, a schedule had been made with other stations; ships had been notified that operators would be on duty at stated hours and

a station clock had been installed with great care. Every night an operator checked the clock with the time broadcast from Eiffel Tower. Several times schedules were not kept and the clock was found to vary when the time signals came in. The clock was re-leveled and readjusted and its quality profanely criticised. One noon the mystery was solved as the chief operator came in just in time to see an ambitious clerk adjusting it to "gun time".

On the beaches the surf pounds high, and all day, and all night long, comes the roar and the heavy boom of the waves. Usually, one soon gets accustomed to it; but if "African liver", or nerves and sun, too much quinine, or too little exercise throw a man off his normal health, those waves pound into his brain; and their unceasing roar nearly drives him mad. One Englishman, a very good friend of mine, told me that he simply had to leave because of "those damn, silly waves that nothing will stop". Personally, it never bothered me. I loved the roar and high driven spray, and I always found it restful and refreshing at the end of a hot day to sit and look out over the sea, and enjoy the coolness of the coming night.

While playing bridge, or sitting talking of an evening, someone will look up and exclaim, "Listen to the bar", or, "Listen to the waves on the beach";

the ever-present sound of the pounding sea is as much a part of Monrovian life as the sun, the heat, or the pouring tropic rain.

The big house in Monrovia where I lived stood high on the rocky ridge which forms the backbone of the city, and from the wide, three-storied verandas, one could look over most of the town. In the early days the broad streets were lined with palm trees; their graceful beauty—for they are the most beautiful trees of the tropics—made a charming setting for the severe red brick and white-pillared houses. For several years the tornadoes, which always cluster about the cape at the beginning and end of the rains, had been particularly severe; and stroke after stroke of lightning destroyed many of the palms. The houses with their metal roofs appeared more or less immune; but a superstition grew up that the palm trees attracted the lightning, and when the streets were straightened, most of these beautiful trees were cut down. From the veranda towards the east, and about one hundred and fifty feet below, was a vast expanse of marshy delta land cut with rivers and creeks extending as far as the eye could reach, until against the skyline, miles away, a final row of trees stood in low silhouette—their shapes always reminded me of a company of marching artillery. I called that ridge, "the

One Hundred and Forty-ninth", and I always looked toward it to see what was the condition of the weather or the haze of the Harmattan. A view across the top of jungle and marsh, such as one had here, is a compensation for many things. When the thunder storms whirled across the jungle, from miles away came the roar of the approaching rain mingled with the crash of thunder and the hissing of the wind in the palms, until at last, the heavy rain curtain dropped down shutting out sight of land and rivers; all other sounds were lost in the steady roar of falling water. On sunny days the brown and green masses of the marsh were darkened here and there as the cloud shadows moved over the leaf tops. Night always brought mystery to the marsh. But the terrible magic of Africa caught at something deep down in the roots of man's origin when the full moon hung low over that land and the palms stood black against the silver of stream and sky. I named the marsh, "The Land of the Five Rivers", and to it I used to go to think things out when vexatious questions called for solitude.

Waiting quietly in some back channel in the shade of the overhanging branches, or drifting softly along, the life of the swamp went on undisturbed before one's eyes. George, my boat boy, knew all

The Land of the Five Rivers.

The customary mode of travel in the narrow bush trails.

A pool which has been inhabited, as far back as people can remember, by a family of manatees.

Along the north-eastern frontier there is a belt of Mohammedan tribes—The great wall of Zarzor shows their influence.

the native stories about the animals and swimming things and enjoyed those trips as much as I did. His good-humoured honest face reflected every thought of the tales he told, and the literal translation from a native tongue into English added much to the interest and charm of the story.

There was little real solitude in the marsh when one got to know it well. The mangroves were always marching forward on their funny long legs to choke up the channels, and small oysters clustered around their roots as if to help hold them in place by their weight. Thousands of crabs wandered in and out between these roots and fought queer, horrid battles over some tidbit one had found. A little amphibious fish crawled out of the shallows on to the mud and up the mangrove roots. Bigeye Bunny, the natives called him. Crocodiles made smooth pathways in the mud between the roots, to and from the channels; and if we were very quiet, we could steal up close to one of the green-brown monsters and watch him taking his ease. The slightest incautious movement or noise, and that crocodile would be galvanized into surprisingly swift movement; a splash and he was gone.

There were birds of every hue, great herons, white egrets, and now and then a paddle of duck. All of the wading birds, great and small, were on

the banks; but I think the most beautiful of all were the kingfishers, as gorgeously coloured as humming birds. The monkeys usually kept away from the mangroves, preferring the higher trees of which there were clumps scattered on the little knolls of solid ground; but their chattering could frequently be heard, and sometimes a tiny, manlike face could be seen peeping inquisitively through the leaves.

Just at sunset the big fish start to leap, and the quiet, softly moving water becomes a mirror reflecting the ever deepening hues of colour from the cloud arches above, spreading in circles of new colour here and there, where the surface is broken by the striking fish. The light grows deeper and softer with each succeeding minute, the rose and gold turning to violet and green, with the trees along the channels standing out in still deeper shades of purple and blue. Now the water and the sky merge, so that the channels and the openings between the trees all run together in the changing light, and the course becomes confusing. As the shadows deepen, the first stars come out, and they, too, are reflected in the water; and our boat floats in an unreal world between water and sky, a shadow place of violet and blue.

Then came mosquito time, as from all over the marsh rose the hum of the awakening millions stir-

ring from the places where, during the day, they had hidden from the sun. It was time to go home. From the bow as it cut the water, and along the sides of the boat, the phosphorescence leaped away in sparks, flashes and waves of bluish fire, and deep down at the stern, the propeller would be clearly visible revolving in a glory of flame. Sometimes crossing the shallow lagoons at this hour, we would pass close to great jellyfish, like lighted Chinese lanterns, floating silently just under the reflected stars.

At the last fork we came in view of the lighthouse on the cape, and dazzled for a moment by its beams, found the world darker than before. Low and clear through the darkness would come the throb of a tom-tom, the pulse beat of Africa.

Looking back at those African days, and reviewing pictures of their many coloured life, I shall remember best and longest, the beauty of my Land of the Five Rivers at mosquito time.

The tropics are always best in the evening, at night or in the early morning; and if one gets up very early, the glory of a West African sunrise well repays one for the trouble. All Africa gets up with the sun, the pepper birds first of all. If there happens to be a mango tree near the house, it is pretty sure to be the gathering place of every pepper bird in the vicinity, and of all the birds I know, the pepper

bird makes more noise and irritating chatter than all the others put together. Natives never seem to have any regular hours for sleep. They will dance or wander about half the night, especially if there is a moon; but with the first rays of sunlight be up and about, as noisy, argumentative and talkative as the pepper birds. As the sun gets up a little higher, the temperature rises rapidly, and then work begins.

Most men work long hours in tropical posts, and Liberia is no exception. Stores usually open at six or seven o'clock and offices at eight. They keep at their work until twelve; then rest for two hours, through the worst heat of the day. Stores reopen until six o'clock, and much of the bookkeeping is done after that. Household servants ordinarily are on duty from six o'clock in the morning until midnight; but no self-respecting steward would think of going to bed before his master does.

The more fortunate men play tennis after four-thirty, and where cement courts have been built, even the rainy season does not interfere very much, for the rain is seldom an all-day affair; and boys with mops can quickly dry off a court. With one hundred and seventy-five inches of annual rainfall, a dirt or gravel court is practically useless, except for the dry season. Golf has yet to put in its appear-

ance in Liberia, although there are one or two courses in the British Colonies on the Coast.

Swimming is too dangerous to be encouraged. The steep slope of the south beach and the high surf make an undertow that will pull a man off his feet in two or three feet of water, and every year, some expert swimmer among the foreign residents pays for his self-confidence. In the rivers or in the bay it is dangerous too, because the rivers are full of mud and debris for much of the year, and the shallow warm waters of the lagoons are ideal breeding places for skin worms and other things. The barracuda hunt along the channel mouths that lead into the bay, and the twisting, rushing currents are so strong that frequently an eleven-oared surfboat cannot make headway against the force of the water.

There is very little opportunity for proper relaxation, such as is possible in most places, where there is a club and better organization for sport—yet one of the things that wears many men down is the tendency to live with their jobs after the office is closed; to work over reports or to get together and talk shop. Troubles and difficulties magnify under such monotonous conditions, and the foreign labour turnover increases in consequence.

Excepting birds and crocodiles, there is very little shooting to be had close to the coast. A few years

ago antelope, water buck and even bush cow could be procured rather easily in the vicinity of Monrovia, but as the roads have been extended the game has retreated from the coast, and wild game is not served by the residents as frequently as a few years ago. Heavy jungle country or rain forest, such as is found in most of Liberia, makes shooting difficult, and for this reason few hunters of big game go to the West Coast.

Tales of big game hunting in Africa usually describe in interesting detail the safari with its equipment of special tents, waterproof boxes, vacuum bottles, camp furniture and amazing variety of expensive armament; all of which requires the transport of much freight by automobiles, a big retinue of servants, and, eventually, from fifty to two hundred porters. The Liberian native manages to kill his elephant with a somewhat less expensive and less complicated equipment.

The hunter strips himself down to a loin cloth, carefully covering his body with grease. He then loads a flintlock musket with a heavy charge of powder and puts a spear down the barrel instead of a bullet. With this in hand, he crawls through the jungle towards a grazing herd of elephants that he has tracked down and possibly followed for days, until they have stopped to feed in thick bush. Creep-

ing up behind the nearest elephant, he places the muzzle of his gun within two or three feet of the animal, pulls the trigger, lets go of his gun and runs. Usually the elephant dashes madly off, and it is on this action that the hunter's life depends. The wounded elephant with the spear shot halfway through him will sometimes wander about for several days before he dies; all the time being patiently trailed by the hunter.

Most of the elephants killed in Liberia are shot as much for their meat as for their ivory. The customary division of the spoil when an elephant is killed is that the chief gets one tusk and the hunter the other. That is why it is almost impossible ever to secure a pair of tusks from a native. There is then a further division of the meat, most of which belongs to the hunter.

From the toes of the elephant the hard skin is carefully removed, as from it the natives manufacture bracelets, which after a little rubbing and wear, take on the colour of old amber. The tail of the elephant is also prized, and is usually mounted with red and blue leather or plaited straw to be used as a fly brush. Sometimes the long coarse hair, which is from one eighth to one sixteenth of an inch in diameter, and eight to ten inches long, is woven

into rings and bracelets or used to fasten amulets on each elbow or around the knees.

I believe the hide is also eaten, because I know of one case where hippopotamus hide was made into soup, as a matter of course, and it seems reasonable that anyone who could digest hippopotamus hide would not stop at elephant.

In the south-eastern part of Liberia is a small, light-coloured elephant, as yet unnamed, which frequents the rough country above the falls of the Cavally River. Hunters are also constantly reporting the existence of a pigmy elephant with long, very thin tusks. It may be, that just as the pigmy hippopotamus was doubted until finally brought out, so we may find that Liberia has a new elephant as well.

The most dangerous game in the Liberian bush is the buffalo (*Bos africanus*), or as it is called on the West Coast, bush cow. Big game hunters in East Africa agree that the bush cow is one of the most difficult animals from a hunter's standpoint and many say that it is more dangerous to hunt than either lion or elephant. In the first place, the bush cow has a keen sense of smell and good eyesight; further, when he charges he keeps his eyes open. The average bull, of the varieties used in Spanish or Latin American bull rings, cannot look forward when his head is down in attack. The African

buffalo, on the other hand, can see where he is going, and as he is as agile on his feet as a cat, it is impossible to dodge and sidestep, as is done in bull fighting. These animals are rather like a steer; but are lighter in weight about the hindquarters. Across the head the horns form a broad band which covers the forehead like armour plate, and then curves down and out into two beautiful, polished points. Bush cows when annoyed or disturbed often double back on their trail and lie in wait in the path of anyone they think is following them, and then as the hunter or traveller passes, charge from the wall of bush on the side of the trail.

One of my associates had a most thrilling escape. He was being carried along in a hammock, the customary mode of conveyance in the narrow bush trails, with his gun bearer near him carrying a double-barrelled shotgun on the lookout for possible birds or other game for the supper pot. The day had been hot and they had been journeying since early morning and Mr. D——, who was suffering from an attack of malaria, was half asleep. The first intimation he had of danger was when his porters dropped him and his hammock in the middle of the trail and dashed headlong into the bush. As he scrambled up he saw a bush cow charging down the trail only a few feet away. He dove into the

bush, fortunately finding his gun bearer had entered at the same place, and had half stopped to see what was going to happen to his master. Mr. D—— grabbed the shotgun and turned as the bush cow stuck his head between the close growing small trees and bushes. It all happened in an instant. Holding the shotgun in one hand, without attempting to bring it to his shoulder, he fired both barrels into the animal's neck from a distance of one or two feet. At that close range the charge of shot had no chance to spread; but ripped into the animal with the force of two heavy slugs, so that its neck was broken and it fell dead, practically on top of him. One of the horns made a nasty wound across the front of his body, fortunately without penetrating the muscular wall beneath the skin.

Notwithstanding that bush cows are numerous and often damage native crops, they seldom attack unless provoked; and following the custom of most animals, unless previously shot at or angered, they will move off on becoming aware of the approach of man.

This is true of elephants in West Africa, otherwise, it would be a very serious matter for people living or travelling in the bush. There are few animals that can outrun an elephant; certainly none that can move as easily through thick bush. The elephant

at high speed ripples and glides over rough country with an ease and endurance that enables him to overtake any living thing. If elephants would attack whenever they became aware of human beings in the vicinity, a trip through West African jungle would be a most dangerous venture. Even taking advantage of the animal's desire to get away and be let alone, hunting in the bush is difficult and calls for more than ordinary ability in stalking. In the first place, animals can move more silently than one would imagine possible; their sense of smell is keen, and their colouring is more or less protective, so that they merge into the blacks, browns and yellows of the forest, and to the inexperienced can hardly be discerned at a distance of twenty feet even when pointed out. Very often, if the native hunter does not hit a vital spot with his first shot he is a goner. I have had guns brought into my place that had been twisted into a corkscrew by a wounded elephant—all that was left of the hunter was a gory spot in the mud where the elephant had trampled him.

Big game shooting with modern rifles in this kind of country usually means that the hunter gets one shot from a distance, almost never exceeding one hundred yards, more usually but from twenty to fifty yards. Considering the chances of the deflec-

tion of a bullet by striking some intervening branch, and the poor visibility, a sportsman must, in all cases, get extremely close to his game. It is largely because of these difficulties, that big game hunters avoid West Africa; preferring the grasslands of East Africa, where the more open character of the country makes a radical difference both in the stalking and in the shooting of game.

This explains why the fauna of Liberia is not as well known as that of many other parts of Africa, and why the pigmy hippopotamus was discovered only in recent years. For the same reason, the zebra-antelope, although reported a few years ago by Sir Harry Johnston, is still comparatively unknown, and no specimens have ever been brought to America. This beautiful antelope is a common article of food in the vicinity of Cape Palmas, and the skins are easily obtainable from the natives; yet I have heard naturalists express doubts as to its existence.

CHAPTER IV

MEAT IN DE BUSH

WILD animals for zoological gardens and biological experimental work have long been an article of export from the Coast, and nearly every foreign trader buys and ships home all kinds of animals. The crews of freight ships customarily buy for their own account parrots, monkeys or even snakes, and when a West African freighter reaches her home port, wild animal buyers come aboard to purchase these at prices which more than compensate the men for their trouble. An American of my acquaintance has established two permanent offices to which the natives bring monkeys, snakes, birds and other small animals which they have caught. One native frequently brought in a bag full of poisonous snakes, which he handled with apparent impunity. My friend, the collector, told me he had watched for a long time to discover the man's method but without success, and only after winning his confidence could he persuade the man to show him his "medicine". This native rubbed himself with a secret prepara-

tion concocted from a certain jungle plant, before attempting to touch the snakes, the effect of which lasted a couple of days; during this time the snakes let him handle them without making an attempt to bite.

There are two interesting specimens of the cobra family: the horned viper and the spitting viper. The latter will spit venom for several feet, and if, by chance, this touches the eye it will cause almost instant blindness and great pain. However, if treated immediately with a wash of permanganate of potash this blindness passes away; but the eye will be weak for months thereafter. Fortunately, the vipers are arboreal, and men are seldom bitten except in a chance encounter in a tree or when the female is heavy with eggs, and, perforce, keeps to the ground.

They are experimenting with this venom now in Germany, as a possible aid in the treatment of locomotor ataxia. A friend of mine once got some of this venom on a finger which was slightly scratched; within two hours his finger swelled up like the proverbial puddin' bag, and he had a bad time with it for several days. Curiously enough, he had been troubled for years with rheumatism and this left him after the swelling disappeared from the finger. So there may be something in the locomotor ataxia treatment after all.

The Diana-diana monkey, with its long black and white hair and bushy white tail is one of the rarest of Liberian animals, only known to exist in Liberia and in the adjacent parts of Sierra Leone. Another beautiful monkey is the Colobus, who frequents the high trees of the big bush and is seldom kept in captivity because of its diet, which is principally composed of buds, young leaves, green shoots, insects and similar food, that cannot be easily procured on long sea voyages or in the winter time in Northern zoological gardens. A Dutchman I knew succeeded in changing the diet of a Colobus by placing near it another kind of monkey, who could subsist on a diet of rice and fruits. He underfed the Colobus, so far as its customary diet was concerned, but left in reach a bowl of boiled rice, such as the other monkey was eating, and in this way the Colobus gradually came to eat cooked rice and was eventually transported to a zoological garden in Holland, where it is still living. The Colobus is the monkey whose coat supplies the trimming on wearing apparel known as "monkey fur".

The big hippopotamus is getting scarce. He has long been valued by the native for food, and as guns have become more prevalent on the Coast, their number has been gradually lessened, until a few years from now will see their final extermination.

The natives are afraid of the big hippo because it will frequently attack canoes, especially if there are young about, and this has made them anxious to destroy the hippo on the lower rivers.

A few years ago the manager of a plantation on the Du River told me that his motor launch had been attacked by a big hippo, who had bitten a hole through the side. This is the only case I know in which a hippo has attacked a large moving power boat.

The smaller variety of hippo, now known in the zoological gardens as the pygmy, is not a real swamp or water dweller. In Liberia the natives call him river-hog and esteem the meat as a delicacy. These animals usually lie in wallows under steep clay banks; are extremely fast on their feet, and if disturbed while feeding in the forest, they will run quite as fast as the wild hog. They are difficult to see and consequently hard to shoot, as the colour of their hide is exactly that of the wet ground and among the thick leaves it takes a sharp eye to detect the difference between an old stump or fallen log and one of these small animals. These hippos are easily tamed, and one that was kept as a pet in a back yard near my house would follow its master all about, begging for milk or other food. It answered to the classic name of Percy, and would have been a

thoroughly desirable pet if it had not kept itself so disgracefully muddy and insisted on rubbing against the white clothes of anyone who approached it. Some of the first of these hippos to be brought to Europe were bought from the father of one of my employees, who had kept them in his back yard as pets, not knowing there was anything extraordinary or particularly valuable about them. The difference in amount between what that man received and the reported sale value in Europe was considerable.

Chimpanzees are always available in Liberia and some of them are extremely intelligent. We had one for a long time that was known as Little Lee. His master, Big Lee, was very fond of him and had taught him to grind the coffee every morning. Little Lee usually hung about the cook's house picking up scraps. There was never any attempt to tie him up or to confine him in any way and when the coffee-mill was filled, Little Lee was told to get busy. At first he apparently enjoyed this; but after a bit it became work and then he had to be threatened by the cook with a stick before he would attend to his morning duties. One of the funniest things I ever saw was that chimp sitting on the kitchen steps grinding coffee and looking over his shoulder at the cook, chattering monkey curses at the top of his lungs, every time the cook picked up the stick. For

all his apparent objections to grinding coffee, he never tried to run away, and when his master went up into the bush he usually rode on the shoulder of one of the carriers, and then promptly established himself in the cook tent or hung about his master in the big tent with never a thought of going back to the woods.

One day as an experiment we took him out into the bush, then hid behind some trees, leaving him alone. Anyone who can imagine or has seen a child suddenly lost from its parents, will understand exactly what happened, for Little Lee threw himself down in the path and gave every appearance of a terror-stricken child. When he finally spied his master behind a tree, he flew to him and held on to his leg so tightly that we could hardly pry him loose; then only by taking him in his arms and carrying him, was he persuaded to stop his crying and be pacified.

In Liberia, in addition to the pigmy hippo, pigmy mice and the possibility of a pigmy elephant, there is a pigmy chimpanzee. This little fellow has not yet been scientifically named, nor have any been brought to either England or America. One specimen was secured alive by a Spanish officer and was taken by him to Spain, a year or more ago. It did not differ in appearance from other chimpanzees

except in size, being only about two feet high although it was an adult.

Most of the chimpanzees suffer from pyorrhœa and it is nearly impossible to find any who are not afflicted with this disease. It is the high mortality among them, rather than any difficulty in catching them, that accounts for their high market value in foreign countries. A friend, who is a wild animal collector as well as a scientist, visited me in West Africa. One day this gentleman was talking about the two chimpanzees that were in the yard playing and remarked that he thought one of them had pyorrhœa. He went out, we following, while a group of native boys gathered around to see what was going to happen. These boys were carriers just down from the interior with loads and were not as sophisticated as the coast people. My friend gave a few grunts in the most approved style of greeting between chimpanzees, whereupon both animals stopped what they were doing, and went to him with every sign of friendliness. To the native boys, a white man who could talk monkey was a marvellous thing, but the most amusing part was yet to come: Mr. B—— made one of the chimps open his mouth, and then to show us the difference between the monkey's teeth and human teeth, he took out his own set of false teeth for comparison. There was

a terrifying yell, "The man be witch!" Those natives went over the fences like so many rabbits. This was the first set of false teeth they had ever seen and Mr. B——'s prestige was very high and his wants were attended to with awe-inspired respect during the remainder of his visit.

There were plenty of other pets, and nearly everyone had several. My own favourite was a water mongoose which looked uncommonly like a small racoon. He was an inveterate hunter and chaser of insects. This animal slept in a small box on a bed made of folded cloth, and on one occasion, when I noticed the bed was not in the box and inquired after it, my steward informed me, "De small missy wash dem small meat's clothes". These animals have an extraordinary sense of smell. This particular one would lie in his box on his back with his paws folded, his eyes innocently closed; but the instant anyone entered the room, he would sniff audibly, and we noticed that he could tell whether it was someone he knew or a stranger. In the first instance, he would climb out of his box, make a funny clucking noise, and come over to be petted; but if he did not know the person, he would stay where he was for a while; then climb out very slowly, and cautiously creep along the wall to a position in back of the newcomer, and, if he did not altogether approve of him,

dash under the chair and bite him in the ankle. Two or three of our friends had to keep their feet on small stools, well off the floor, until amicable relations had been established.

These animals make ideal pets; but it is impossible to keep them in the United States, because having no natural protection of fat or fur for winter, they would die in the first cold weather. Curiously enough they are among the prohibited animals which may not be brought in. The same lack of knowledge of animals is shown in several places on the list of those excluded, as for instance, the fruit bat. This bat lives in Mexico and could have flown in if it could live here, but it eats fruit, therefore it has been solemnly outlawed and none are in our zoological gardens. Nature enforced that law of exclusion long before our solons thought of fruit bats, just as it has kept the mongoose to the warmer lands.

One of the most unusual pets was a pangolin owned by one of the engineers. This animal, locally called an armadillo, is covered with large, horny plates like scale armour. It is not in the least like an armadillo, however, except that it has a shell of horny plates. An armadillo has jaws, which a pangolin does not need, as it feeds on ants and small aphides, which it licks up with a tongue as long as

its body, and which curls up like a spring in a recess in its throat. From head to tail, this one was about three feet long, and when it moved over the floor made a sound like empty tin cans; but for all its curious appearance, it was much more active than a cat and could climb like a monkey. Its tail was prehensile and it could climb up a rope and along walls, or swing by its tail from a nail in the ceiling in a way that was most extraordinary. The pangolin and the house cat never made friends. After a few attempts on the armour plate, the cat gave it up as a bad job, contenting himself by spitting from a distance.

There are three species of anteater in Liberia: the small pangolin I have just described and a giant one, much like it, excepting that it is much larger. I have seen a skin or set of its scales which was six feet long and three or more feet wide. In addition to these, there is the hairy long-eared anteater. All of these animals are "chopped" by the natives as the flesh is considered a delicacy.

There is the little tree bear or hyrax, a delightful and playful little fellow, and the "softly softly" or potto. From the latter has come an amusing misunderstanding. The natives told the foreigners on the coast, "softly softly catch monkey", meaning, actually, that the potto, being carnivorous, catches

and kills monkeys. The foreigners, not knowing anything about a "softly softly", seized on the phrase as something clever—the way to catch someone or do something was to go about it quietly. So in this day a statement of fact has become an adage, and "softly softly catch monkey" is a wise rule of the Coast.

Speaking of the larger animals, up the St. Paul River is a pool which has been inhabited, as far back as people can remember, by a family of manatees. They are usually difficult to find, and only once did I get anywhere near one of them in a boat. Two years ago when we put a cable ferry across the river near this pool, the ferry-keeper demanded a rifle because he said he was afraid of, "Dem big things dat come and sit on de ferryboat every morning". He explained he had to go down with a handful of rocks and chase them off his boat before he could go aboard. I wondered. It was a good story to get a free rifle anyhow.

These animals are bigger than a seal, but I have heard that they attain great size in other places. The ones I speak of would probably weigh three or four hundred pounds and have a curious cowlike head and human expression. They have a mouth and lips like that of a cow, well adapted for the grasping and tearing of the soft water lettuce and

juicy plants that form their food. They are mammals, and suckle their young by holding them against the breast just as human mothers would, frequently standing upright in the water with the baby manatee clasped in their arms. The fore flipper is longish like a human arm and it is thought that these animals inspired the legend of mermaids, although I think that even a sailor would have to be away from home a long time before he would be capable of visualizing in them the beauty of the mermaids of legend and story.

Most animals in the tropics have hair rather than fur, but in Liberia otter not only abound in all the rivers but their pelts are unusually thick and the colour a beautiful soft brown. When dressed, the skins make superb coats. The natives call them beaver, but they really belong to the true otter family.

West Africa is the home of many kinds of cats, and among the difficulties of the farmers are the attacks by leopards on dogs, goats, and small animals. Many tales are told of leopards coming through the doors and windows to seize a dog which has taken refuge under the cot of his master. There are many varieties of the smaller members of the cat tribe, as well as the leopards, and their skins are constantly offered for sale or made into bags by the natives.

Leopards' teeth and claws are highly prized as amulets, and are always used as part of the medicine on devil-dance masks.

It is a startling experience to have a leopard jump out into the road in front of one's automobile, and although this never happened to me it did happen to one of my friends. I had a somewhat similar experience with a serval, which is about the size of one of our largest wild cats, somewhat similar in colour, although the serval is spotted like a leopard, and has a long tail and large untufted ears.

The blue serval and the civet are also common to Liberia—the last, however, really belongs to the weasel family. But the most superb of all the smaller species is the golden cat. The best description I can think of is to say its coat looks like sun sparkling on gold cloth. Several threadlike lines of dark brown mark the back from head to tail and the sides and paws are spotted dark brown.

One evening when several of us were sitting in my house talking, the conversation suddenly stopped and every eye was glued to the door. There stood a great, grey, catlike animal as big as a good-sized dog. He looked at us and we at him. I put out my hand and called and he came over to me as unconcernedly as a house cat. It was a tame civet that had become lost and had been attracted by our voices.

Next day we found his owner and sent him home.

Coasting along in a canoe close to the edge of the rivers, I sometimes saw great monitor lizards, six feet or more in length, hanging from the bushes or crawling along the tree trunks and roots in the shadows under the bank. Their markings of ivory-white and cream, laced on a brownish-grey background, are exceedingly beautiful and are brighter and more distinct in life than when the skin is made into leather for shoes or bags.

There are two very beautiful lizards frequently seen in the trees, although these do not grow to the size of the laced monitors. One is red-headed, the other not so highly coloured, but spotted brown and black. The red-headed ones sometimes appear as a bright bluish purple, apparently changing colour with the seasons. Only the males are brilliant of hue, the females being a subdued grey.

Among the curiosities of the West Coast are the islands of bats which are located at several places between Liberia and the Congo. One of these islands in Liberia is located about fifty miles from the coast on the St. Paul River near Polopelli. Here the river winds about and is broken up by numerous islands, sand bars and swamps, and on one of these islands the bats make their home, literally by the millions. During the day they hang from the bushes

and trees, but at sunset they rouse themselves and fly out on their food-hunting expeditions. So great is the number of these animals that from a distance they go out in a black cloud like a column of smoke, for which they might easily be mistaken.

Every house has its quota of small geckos, so called because of the funny little noise they make. They resemble lizards and vary in length from one to four inches. These little animals are nocturnal and have adhesive pads on their toes which enable them to crawl all over the windows and walls. The true lizard does not have the advantage of these useful pads or disks. The geckos are usually encouraged because they are quite harmless and devour multitudes of mosquitoes and gnats. The West African ones never seem to make friends with human beings and although I tried for several years, I could never get them to come to me. In the West Indies I once had four, who were perfectly tame and would play on the reading table under the light in the evening and take bread crumbs from my fingers.

Cows seldom do well and milk-cows are unknown on the coast. A few miles back, in open fields, several farmers have raised cows successfully, but I do not know of their having milked any. Usually cows mean beef and nothing else. Probably as long as they are kept away from fly-infested bush they

can be raised. Goats do very well and some foreign residents keep them for fresh milk which otherwise is unobtainable.

Dogs soon get skin disease or other complaints. Horses almost never live on the coast, although they seem to do very well in the interior. The belts of tsetse fly-infested bush are probably responsible for the loss of the horses. Although tsetse fly is common, I never knew of but one case of sleeping sickness on this section of the Coast, and that befell one of our own men. The real sleeping sickness districts are much farther to the eastward, but nevertheless, when one of these flies, with its wings folded like the blades of a pair of scissors, settled, it always gave one a little shiver.

West Africa is a land of insects and I recall many a scramble to get away from a rhinoceros beetle attracted by the light on the porch of an evening. Their whirring wings and clumsy, bungling flight sound like a badly spluttering aeroplane.

The tumbo fly is less noisy than the beetle but much nastier. The female lays its eggs on clothing, especially clean wash drying in the shade, and the hatched tiny grub immediately proceeds to dig in the first time the owner puts on his clean things. Some days later a swelling and a boil-like sore apprise the victim of trouble and eventually the extraction of a

white grub like a big fat worm from under the skin will relieve him of the visitor even if temporarily nauseating him. When this fly lays its eggs on an animal the animal is usually helpless and must wait until the grub decides to come out of its own accord and drop off, which it does just before it emerges from its worm state into a fly.

Two of my men in the interior told me that they had been "witched" and related the extraction of one of these tumbo grubs with every evidence of fear. I was constantly surprised at the little knowledge the African had of the animals and insects of his country. He misnames them all and mixes up their habits. For instance many times natives and others have told me the pangolin or small armoured ant-eater lives on palm nuts as well as insects. This animal has a tongue like a thread as long as its body. It has no jaws. On its tongue is a sticky arrangement that catches insects. It does lick ants and aphides from the palm but it could not eat a nut if it tried. Yet in all the years the African has not observed any of these things.

The real bug par excellence is known locally as the "bug-a-bug". This is an ant which I think is either the true army ant or a near cousin. Across the roads, at any time or anywhere, one may meet one of these ant armies from an inch to five feet in

width but of unknown length. I have run across one of these streams of insects early in the afternoon and returned, three or four hours later over the same path, to find it just as large, and the ants still headed in the same direction. These ants have a habit of invading a house, and when this occurs, there is nothing to do but for every living thing to get out of that house until the ants have gone. A tale is told of the way they got their name: One of the early settlers, who had to abandon his house in the middle of the night because of them, asked a native what kind of a bug that was. The native replied, "Massah, me no savvy, he be jes bug". The colonist replied, "Well, he's the bug of bugs". Natives will tell you that the big python constrictors, after making a kill of a deer or calf, or of any animal sufficiently large to arouse in the python's mind the idea of a long, comfortable after-dinner nap, will carefully circle the bush around the kill for a half mile or more, to make sure there is no danger from one of these ant armies, before daring to distend themselves with a gorge of food.

The only thing that will turn the "bug-a-bug" is fire. It is very interesting to watch their organization and if you disturb one of the columns with a stick to observe how quickly the workers scurry around and the soldiers, readily identified by their

massive jaws, come rushing up to the attack. When they enter a house they carry away every bit of food, and in watching one of their armies you can see pieces of larger insects and scraps being rapidly pushed through the ranks, which break away before, and close in after the food-carrier, as if he had the full right of way.

The one compensation in having them attack a house is that you can rest assured they will clean out every mouse, rat, snake, bug, or worm, that may be hidden anywhere in it. I have pushed one of the slow-moving centipedes, six inches long or so, into the edge of one of these columns, and seen it literally cut to pieces before my eyes, and before the last piece stopped wiggling, carried away. There are tales told of torturing prisoners in the old days by tying the captive near one of these columns of ants, but from their number and the voracity with which they attack, I do not believe any victim could live to suffer long.

At the beginning of the rains in April or May, flying ants are a pest. Few houses are screened with mosquito-proof wire netting on the Coast, and when the lamps are lighted the centre table is completely covered with these insects. They drop their wings easily and swarm over everything. At meal time it is almost impossible to keep them out of the dishes.

Fortunately, after one or two uncomfortable evenings they disappear until the next year. In the sandy fields or palm groves, where these ants make their nests, at this same time of the year the flying swarms during the daytime issue from holes like clouds of steam, and until one goes close enough to discover the cause, one would never suspect there could be so many insects in the world.

The beginning of the rains also brings to notice a luminous worm called by the natives "two-headed snake," which grows to be eighteen inches or more in length. It gets its name from the fact that the tail imitates the shape and colouring of the head so exactly, that only by close examination could one determine which is which. Along the bush trails at night its luminous form is often seen as it makes its wriggling way. But even if one could not see them, their presence could be detected as they give off a most foul and disgusting odour.

One of the joys of the African coast and bush is a burrowing flea known as a jigger. This nasty little insect crawls into one's shoes and attacks the soles of the feet, or with the bare-footed native, penetrates the tender skin around the toes, promptly digging a hole for himself under the skin. At first it is quite painless; but after two or three days, the jigger begins to grow and surround itself with a circle of

egg cells, and then there is a slight itching sensation and a faint blue-black mark, about the size of a pin-head, appears on the surface of the skin. The only way to get rid of a jigger is to cut it out. Care must be taken not to break the sac in which it has enclosed itself, otherwise it will result in an infected wound. Frequently, when the insect is removed it will be found to have grown to the size of a pea. Everybody gets jiggers and pays little attention to them, but I found that a weekly oiling of house floors with kerosene and a drop of it on the inside of my shoes a remarkably good preventative. Natives are constantly bothered by them and are most expert in their removal, but even so, they get badly infected feet and suffer greatly from these pests.

The butterflies are beautiful, and represent a field that, I believe, has never been explored, for so far as I know, there is no collection of the butterflies of Liberia. Frequently, when out hunting, I have stumbled on a wet patch in a trail literally covered with hundreds of butterflies. Hovering, fluttering, slowly opening and closing their wings, dancing by twos and tens, rainbow coloured—they made a rare and lovely sight.

Fishing for whales, huge sharks and other oil or skin-bearing animals and fish off the West African coast has been neglected, but at Dakar a very con-

siderable industry has developed in the catching and shipping of fresh langouste for the European markets.

The sea swarms with fish: porpoises, sawfish, huge sharks and ray are always found preying on the schools of smaller fish. The great rays attain enormous size and can often be seen sunning themselves on the warm, glassy sea. The natives are afraid of them as they can easily upset the canoes, and their uncanny shape and appearance well merit the name, devilfish. The question of the establishment of fish factories for the extraction of oil and the preparation of fertilizer has been taken up and should be a most profitable enterprise, if the quantity of material available is any indication.

Electric catfish are found in most of the sluggish rivers, and the shock from one of these living electric batteries is amazingly strong considering they never grow longer than eighteen to twenty inches. The electric power and apparatus nature has installed in these fish is the same as the electric eels of South America. The eels, of course, attain great size, and it is reported that their electric power is strong enough to knock down large animals as they come to drink at the pools and back waters. One of our men, who had previously been in South America, told me, while discussing the relative

power of these eels and the Liberian catfish, that on one occasion a dozen men, holding hands to form a chain out into the river, had all been knocked down when one of them had been attacked by an electric eel. The voltage discharged by a big eel is very high—probably more than double the average lighting current in our houses—yet an examination of their bodies reveals no great storage battery, such as we use for electric power; only a few small glands, of no particular weight or size, are all that are required for the accumulation of their electric force. Some day, scientists will discover the secret, and from their work may come some new form of storage for electrical energy which will reduce the weight of our heavy batteries, and motor car manufacturers will advertise as their latest superlative equipment, "the electric catfish system".

CHAPTER V

THE AFRICAN TOWER OF BABEL

LIBERIA stands at a point in the great belt of negro culture where all roads meet, and by that I mean it is just to the west of the Bantu peoples and just to the south of the Mohammedans of the Soudan. For this reason there is a greater admixture of languages here than in any other area of similar size on the West Coast. Along the north-eastern frontier there is a belt of Mohammedan tribes, who have come down from the Soudan and who speak Arabic dialects named after these tribes, as, Mendi, Bandi, Boozie or Loma. In the extreme north-east corner is the Gissi, and then between them and the coast, the Gola and Vai.

The Golas are the oldest tribe, if native tradition is given credence, for all of the other tribes say, "Our fathers met the Golas when they came first, first time". The Golas show every sign of being more primitive than the other people around them, and many of their customs vary greatly from those

of the other tribes. They have never been studied scientifically. One of their totems, ma-fu, the thing that flies in the wind, is a carved stone lizard-like animal with human buttocks and no tail. Considering the fact that this type of fetish is usually found where rain making is an important matter, I suggest that this indicates a possible origin far to the eastward where there is no heavy rain belt, and to some extent this theory is borne out by their language, which does not indicate northern or Soudanese origin.

The Vais are clearly a Mohammedan people from the north, and their own traditions tell of the breaking up of a Soudanese "empire", whose headquarters were near the salt lakes, and the subsequent wanderings and wars as the remnant fought its way down to the coast.

Along the coast proper are the tribes known as Bassas, Krus and Grebos, and it is probable that the country now occupied by the Vais was held three or four hundred years ago by the Bassas. Both the Bassas and Krus are closely affiliated in language; the first tribe, however, is split into two great branches generally designated as the Coast and Bush Bassas.

The Krus were formerly slave traders, hunters and fishermen, but for many years past these people

have worked on ships as labourers and sailors. All freight ships rely on this tribe for deck labour and the Krus now depend on the ships for their subsistence. So specialized has this tribe become that the very customs of the tribe have changed and are now built around a seafaring life.

The story of their origin, as told by them, is that, "First, first time a Kru man complained to God that he had no woman, so God said, 'You got best, you go catch one fish, you no chop him; you put dem fish in your house and go sleep' ". The Krus tell that when the first man woke up, in place of the fish, he found a beautiful girl and from the children of this first couple sprang the Krus.

In the immediate centre of the country are the two great tribes of Bush Bassa and Pessi, sometimes spelt Kpessi, and at the extreme southern corner is the territory of the Grebos.

These last people are very intelligent and advanced, and from them came the first tribesman to be elected Vice President of Liberia. The Grebos like the Bassas have split into two groups. The one nearest the coast has largely adopted Christianity, and while preserving to a great extent its tribal organization, has shown an astonishing ability to adapt itself to modern education and the economics of a Western type of civilization. The interior

branch of the Grebos is still living under the old tribal and more primitive conditions, adhering to the traditions and religious practices of its ancestors.

There are several smaller tribes in the eastern and central portions of the country such as the Dei and Gio, but scattered all over the country are settlements of Mandingos, a people closely akin to the Fulah and Filanes of Nigeria.

Most of the iron workers are Mandingos and one of the curious products, typical of their culture in Liberia, is iron money. This money is shaped like a small twisted rod of iron, about sixteen inches long, and T-shaped at one end; the other is flattened into something not unlike an arrowhead. The normal rate of exchange of iron money is sixteen to the English shilling, and in some of the markets of the far interior, it is first necessary to change silver money into these iron bars before purchases can be made. The Mandingo is truly the Jew of West Africa and combines his skill as a trader with great ability as a Mohammedan missionary.

Every tribe speaks a different language or dialect, and as the roots of some of these dialects are Semitic, others Hamitic, the whole being mixed with negro words, the grammatical construction varies greatly. It is difficult for anyone to acquire a working ability with many of them, but nearly every

native can speak several of these dialects or languages; and in travelling through the interior, it is sometimes necessary to speak through two or even three interpreters. A sentence passing through the hands of so many hasty translators is a scandalous thing, and if the chief, to whom it is addressed, receives a version of the original as garbled as the one the white man gets from the chief in reply, it is no wonder that good understanding is difficult.

The English speaking West Coast African commonly uses what Americans would call English English; but in Liberia, as might be expected from its early connection with the United States, the educated people speak English more or less after the manner of Americans, and English is the official language of the Liberian Government and schools.

Along the whole West Coast, however, there has grown up a lingua franca known as West Coast pidgin. This differs considerably from Chinese pidgin, although it is based on the same idea, and just as in China, so here in Africa, one has to learn it and not talk "funny English", thinking it will be understood. In conversations with house boys, uneducated Kru and Bassa boys and bush natives, who have come to the coast to work, this idiom is commonly used, not only by foreigners, but by the educated Coast Africans themselves. I am told that in

Willie, Paramount Chief of the Boozies.

A Pessi Chief and his household.

the early days before the native languages were studied, it was even used in the churches by those missionaries who preached to congregations of tribesmen, and that in reading the Bible they made hasty translations into this language in order to be understood by the hearers.

Be the truth of this what it may, the fact is that every resident or newcomer to the Coast soon speaks some pidgin, and usually learns, as a beginning, the first chapter of Genesis translated into pidgin, which begins as follows:

> "First, first time, nothin' no live, just putta putta (mud). God say, 'Whassa matter?' He go to he carpenter shop and take one big lantern an' hang him in de sky. He say, 'You stay so—o, you be sun.' Den he go take one small lantern an' he go hang him round de other side an' he say, 'You stay so—o, you be moon.' "

When a man is sick a native will say, "He want to die small". And when the first pianos were brought to the Coast a description given by a Kru was, "Dem box from de steamer, Mammy thrash him and he cry." If a man is home, "he live", and if he is not at home, "he no live". When dinner is served, "de chop passed". To hurry is to "go one time". The difference between coming in a little

while, coming quickly and coming immediately is expressed by "he come small"; "he come one time", and "he come just now". Can or be able is expressed by the word fit, and a native workman will tell you, "I no fit do dat", or "I no fit". To think a proposition over is "to go hang head", and to admit the other man is right, one says, "you got best". Stubbornness is "hard head". In addition to the great variety of these expressions, there is a special accent and inflection used in this dialect which is delightfully quaint, and until the foreigner here has become accustomed to this, it is very difficult for him to identify the words. Everyone gets a great deal of amusement from this form of talk and some of its expressions are so pat that they enter into the common language of foreigners on the Coast, as, for instance, the word "palava". This word is used in a hundred ways and means a contention, a fight, a conversation, a discussion, or a noise. "Court palava" is the trial of a case, or when "Court palava catch him", it means that a man has been sued. In giving orders for the daily meals to the steward one talks "chop palava". Once when some carriers threw down their loads on the trail and ran into the bush they yelled, "I be meat", which meant that they were going to hide in the bush like wild animals and could not be caught or brought back.

One day I sent a steward through the rain to find out if a man I wanted to see were home before going to call, and the boy came back with the following explanation: "Massah, I go look him good; he no live". By which I understood that he had gone to the man's house and inquired; but found he was not at home.

When a boy wishes to tell you he can understand a little of a language and speak a few words of it, he will express this by saying, "I hear him small an' talk him one one".

Both the Coast African, who has been educated in the system of the West, and the native tribesman, educated in the bush, are fond of speaking in parables, and constant reference and allusion by the educated African to Biblical stories gives a picturesque and quaint value to their public speeches, as well as to the more homely everyday conversations. With all of the Coast talk is mixed allusion to local proverbs as, "softly softly catch monkey", or "don't help a sick leopard".

A high official once told me, when I asked him why he did not take drastic action against a despicable political attack, the following story:

"One day a big chief sent his son out with an old experienced hunter, in order that the little boy might learn something of the science of catching or killing

game. They walked a long time until, finally, they came to a place where the game trails showed the animals were in the habit of crossing. After a weary wait the little boy became impatient, but the hunter told him he must not lose patience as that was part of the thing he had to learn. Suddenly a waterbuck appeared in the trail, and the little boy put his gun to his shoulder, and was just about to shoot, when the hunter snatched his gun away; then, jumping from behind the bush into the open, the hunter yelled and waved his arms. The buck dashed madly at right angles from the trail. The little boy was almost in tears and made 'big mouth'; but the old hunter said, 'You come look'. The boy followed the hunter across the trail and saw there, concealed by the bushes, a precipice, and at its foot—dead—the waterbuck. The hunter said, 'You see, I know dat place, I know dem deer, he go jump. When you know, you no waste dem cartridge' ".

Incidentally, the gentleman who told this story was right, he did not waste a cartridge; but his political opponent used all of his in vain. It was the difference between knowing when, and the too hasty action of the amateur.

The natives particularly like the story of the boy who was noted in the village where he lived for being a most outrageous liar. One day this boy,

while walking through the forest, saw at the foot of a great tree a human skull. He stopped and regarded it with interest, and then after the African manner, greeted it:

"How do, Mr. Skull? How you? Which part you come? What bring you here?" The skull replied with a sardonic smirk, "How do, boy, I be fine too much, how you?" The boy, who could scarcely believe his ears, ran as fast as he could to the chief to whom he told his tale.

Now the chief knew the boy's reputation, and as the palm wine of the night before had left him in no mood for trifling, he decided to impress the world with his authority, so calling some of his soldiers he said to them, "Go with this boy and talk to the skull he has found. If the boy speaks the truth, bring him back to me and I will reward him, because this is a wonderful thing; but if that skull does not talk, and if this boy is lying again, you cut his head off and leave him there, so that all shall know it is bad to tell lies". The boy, accompanied by the soldiers, returned to the skull, and he began:

"How do, Mr. Skull, I bring my friends for palava with you". The skull lay quietly on its bed of jungle mould; the insects buzzed in the leaves about, but not a sound came from the skull. The boy begged and pleaded, "Mr. Skull, I begs you,

Mr. Skull, I prays you, say something". But the skull never uttered a sound.

The soldiers after killing the boy left his head by the skull and went away. When they were gone the skull turned to the head of the boy and said, "You be big fool, mouth brought me here an' now, mouth brought you here".

Of all the tribesmen, only the Vais and Mandingos have the art of writing; the Mandingos using Arabic, and the Vais, a system of written characters which have a superficial resemblance to Arabic. In reality there is a very great difference, as the Vais have developed an alphabet and system of writing all their own within the last three hundred years.

The more advanced tribes have embraced Mohammedanism, which is making rapid progress throughout the interior, and to people living under a clan economic system, it offers an ideal stepping-stone from paganism to the more advanced ideals of Christianity.

In this connection the difference in dogma that has divided Protestant Christians, and which is carefully inculcated in native converts, has had a confusing effect that the singleness of Mohammedanism avoids. One native asked me, "Massah, what kind of gods be dem Baptist God and dem Methodist God and dem Presbyterian God? De

God-palava man each place say he God got best. I go send my pickin' for learn book. Which place you t'ink he must go?" This was a somewhat difficult question because I doubt if many of us could explain in a way that would be clear to ourselves, let alone to a native, the exact difference between a Baptist God and a Methodist God, but I knew the native in question understood the belief of Islam and hurriedly recalling what little I knew about it, and the names of Powers, which I had seen written in a mosque in the Near East, I asked him if he knew the seven names of Allah the "Mulley" [1] people talk about. He said he did. I then explained that all the gods were one God; but the Baptists call Him by one name, the Methodists by another, the Presbyterians by a third, the Catholics by a fourth and so on, just as the Mohammedans call Allah by all the seven great names. This was entirely comprehensible to the native and I hope it cleared his mind as much as it relieved mine to have avoided saying, "I do not know".

This same confusion of gods reminds me of an amusing story told me by a friend of mine, who overheard the following argument between two of his Christian boat-boys, one a Lutheran, the other a Catholic, as to the merits of their respective

[1] West Coast pidgin for Mohammedan teachers.

churches. The Lutheran said, "De God belong we church be big past you, an' we God-palava man he make big mouth an' he all dress in so-so black. He be fine for true". After thinking this over for a while the Catholic boy replied, "You big fool, de God-palava man we church when he go talk we God, he clothes be so-so silk an' he drink plenty gin an' he wear one fine-fine hat like alligator's mouth an' he got one medicine ring. You go kiss dat ring, you goin' live forevah, have plenty women an' no work". My friend said this stumped the other boy completely, but he never heard if he changed gods.

It seems to me that if any lasting success in religious teaching is to be achieved in West Africa, there must be a system of non-sectarianism, at least until considerable advance over the present tribal conditions justifies a return to dogmatic discussion.

For carrying money and valuables or in sending them from the coast to the interior, we always used a Mohammedan or high class pagan tribesman, and in my seven years of experience in forwarding large sums of money by these messengers, never had a single loss.

While natives' ideas of honesty may seem queer from the Western viewpoint, they are extremely moral and honest. I always had Mohammedan house-boys, and I never locked anything up—neither

money, food, nor cigarettes. Further, I never lost anything, with the single exception of a small theft by someone who was not employed in the house. There is a great sense of loyalty and honesty when they are part of an organization or household; but where there is no feeling of the violation of hospitality, or when your property is accessible to boys not of your household, then the native does not hesitate sometimes to help himself.

One of the American engineers appeared in a heated frame of mind one morning and complained that two of my men had stolen all of his breeches. I called the two, both old servants, and inquired. They immediately admitted the truth of the charge. I asked why they "put shame on me". One burst out, "Massah, they no be your pants". "True", said I, "but they were my brother's". They understood this as a clan brother, of course. Both were very upset, and immediately returned the stolen breeches with many explanations and expressions of regret. They both kept their jobs, too, as more faithful and trustworthy men would have been hard to find anywhere. A traveller visiting a native village is protected under tribal law from pilfering, and it would be a great disgrace to the tribe and Chief if any theft occurred.

A native's ideas on theft are entirely different

from his ideas on fraud. If the average native can put over a sharp deal, he regards that as legitimate and as a tribute to his own cleverness. For example, when a new clerk is brought to the Coast by one of the foreign traders the news of his arrival soon spreads abroad. A native will amble into the store and in his most engaging manner approach the new clerk, speaking in the dialect of the Coast something like this: "Good morning, Massah, I be glad for see you. Massah, I be glad for true. Yes, Massah, we people all glad for true". If the white man seems approachable or smiles, all this talk is accompanied by vigorous hand shaking, bowing and much laughter. If the white man asks why so much enthusiasm, the native proceeds, "Massah, dat first white man, he be mean. He no have fine face like you. We no 'gree trade with dat man. Massah, I buy plenty t'ings dis place. Every moon I bring my moon money, but dat first old man, he be mean for true, plenty time I sit down here, I no buy nothin'. Massah, I want buy small t'ing dis mo'nin': I want one bottle gin, one head tobacco, one bag salt. I go pay you when de moon finish. I go tell my people you be come".

If the new man is green enough the native gets the credit, and he may pay sometime if he must; but as soon as the white man gives the credit, word is

passed along and that store finds itself doing a rushing business on credit until someone wakes the new man up. Then the natives, in no way abashed, assure the trader, "You be proper white man; you no play; you no be fool; so we do country fashion". There is no sense whatever of having attempted to do something crooked. They simply tried the new man out.

On the other hand the sense of honour and honesty is well illustrated by the story of Yango. This man was a native hunter who had attached himself to the Boundary Survey, making himself useful in many ways and bringing in fresh game for the party. When the season's work was over, the Red Shirts and the engineers came out to the coast, but Yango begged for the rifle and some cartridges and stayed behind. He promised the Chief Engineer he would shoot an elephant and bring him the ivory in payment. The engineer went home on leave; months passed, and then one day, in walked Yango with a native servant behind him carrying a seventy-two pound tusk. He gave it to the American in charge because, "You be my massah's brudder". He then asked for two shillings to hire a carrier to bring in the other tusk. Eventually it arrived, although Yango had trouble with the chief with whom he had stored it. The chief claimed that as

the elephant had been shot in his country, he was entitled to one of the tusks. The second tusk weighed sixty-eight pounds.

Later when I saw Yango I told him he was a good man. Instead of being pleased, he responded indignantly, "Massah, I no be rascal man, I say I bring him, I bring him". He went off after this perfectly satisfied that he had fulfilled his word and without demanding any present. Later we made an effort to re-employ him. His type of honesty, however, is not unusual, as without doubt ninety-five per cent of the true natives would act in exactly the same way.

Goods are commonly left in charge of the chief in native villages without the slightest danger of being tampered with, but a very great deal depends on the white man's attitude toward the native as to how successful and pleasant his visit will be. Liberian natives have a very high sense of self-respect but they have little or no use for a man whose conduct shows that he has no respect for himself and none for the native. A foreigner under these conditions is likely to have a bad time, but whenever you hear of a man who cannot keep native servants or who is continually dismissing his employees, you can be perfectly certain that it is more the fault of the man than of the natives.

As I mention elsewhere, all natives, indeed all Coast Africans, love litigation, and the most frequent source of their constant "lawing" is trouble over their women. If someone makes up with a woman or a woman "catches friend" with a man who has no legal right to her, no fight with fists or weapons is thought of; the brother, father, uncle, or whoever claims her, immediately starts "court palava". The defendant finds himself in "mammy palava" at once. If a native suspects "friend palava", he hauls the woman off to the chief or headman; a medicine man is called who administers sasswood, and under fear of the sasswood, the woman will "call the man's name". Damages are demanded of the man and usually obtained. There is no idea of any reflection on the woman, unless she is a head wife, in which case, if he so desires, the husband may have her punished; but to the native such an affair is a trespass on property that demands damages rather than punishment. Most natives are continually in trouble over "mammy palava".

While it is true that polygamy is customary and under the clan system everybody is owned by someone, it is also true that the women have a great influence and do more or less exactly as they please. With these people polygamy seems to be entirely satisfactory and while I suppose there are many

cases where jealousy or bad feeling arise, the fact is, that after a long period of fairly close contact with the natives, I never actually heard of such a case. One woman is always selected as the head wife. She runs the household and it is an extremely rare thing for her to be deposed from this position. It is the head wife who is responsible for her husband's food and who exercises care to see that no enemy poisons him. The other women of the household are accustomed to this condition, in fact, know nothing else.

The women as well as the men live and work according to ritual and custom. So it is, that the women must plant the seeds and attend the growing rice and vegetables. The men cut and burn the brush on the little clearings; but with that their work stops, for all believe that woman is the source of life and increase; if men did the planting a good crop would not be possible. The idea is not confined to Africa for the old fertility cult, of which it is a part, once extended over most of the known world and influenced our own ancestors. Much of the fishing in the rivers and streams is done by the women, although in this the men join. Sewing is men's work. The women usually spin the thread, using a crude wooden spindle rolled between hand and thigh as they squat at the work, with a big bowl of the

pale brown native cotton from which to draw the thread.

The native wears clothes entirely as a matter of show, as a display of wealth or as a protection from cold. Until he has been taught by foreigners, he has no false modesty and no idea that his body is disgraceful and should be covered up. The ordinary, comfortable thing for a native to wear is the loin cloth. This is worn by both sexes; but the men also wear a poncho-shaped country cloth of the type that has a square hole for the head to slip through when it is thrown over the shoulders and with a large pocket in front. The women sometimes wear strips of country cloth, but more generally use a square of brightly coloured foreign cloth tied shawl-like about the hips, and when more prosperity permits, a second single piece of cloth is tied over the shoulders.

Children of both sexes commonly go naked, but the daughters of the wealthier natives wear little belts and aprons of bright coloured beads. Beads are also made into bracelets and necklaces and worn by both sexes. I remember one day when it was pouring rain, I saw the head woman of one of my native men coming into the compound dressed in a loin cloth, but shielding herself from the wet with an umbrella. That umbrella was really used as a sign of prosperity, as she had left her clothes at

home so they would not get wet, and of course the rain rolled off her carefully oiled skin. There was no intent or sense of immodesty. To readers who have not lived in the tropics, this may be difficult to comprehend; but it is true, that in a month or so of residence, it ceases to be a matter of notice whether anyone wears clothes or not.

The dowry or dash paid by a man for a woman is kept by the family clan. It is frequently surprisingly large and may run from nine pounds sterling to as much as thirty. If the woman is unsatisfactory or if she decides she does not like the man and returns to her people—as she has the right to do under native law—the dowry must be returned. This now becomes a long and serious affair. What her keep has cost the man—all the gifts he has made—all the goods he paid the clan for her—everything is figured out in detail and in kind. It takes days. As one gets back from the coast, in the districts where money is more difficult to secure, or where iron rods take the place of money, as is the custom in the north-eastern part of the country, these dowries are figured out in every conceivable kind of property; by cows, sheep, country cloths, brass pots, iron bars, knives, salt, rice, palm oil and tobacco. It was through the study of these little marital arrangements that I discovered installment buying had not

With these people polygamy seems to be entirely satisfactory.

The women sometimes wear strips of country cloth.

Sympathetic magic—the use of white paint on fever patients to fool the devil.

There are many kinds of devils in Liberia.

originated in America. On the contrary, it has been customary in Africa for thousands of years, and if the article—in this case, the woman—was not fully paid for within the stipulated time, it is perfectly easy to bring a proceeding before the chief in order to compel her return.

Not all of the natives are as astute as Zu, who borrowed ahead on his wages to buy a rather old woman for the bargain price of nine pounds. When I inquired of him why he did not pick out a young, good looking woman, he explained, "Massah, dat woman fit for make plenty pot. I go sell dem pot and dat woman no cost me nuthin' ".

Frequently, a man will have or buy many more women than he can possibly want about his house. In this case, the women will usually "catch friend" with some unattached poor man. Then the man and woman go to her owner and agree that all her children shall be his children and they build a house near that of the woman's owner. In this way the clan is built up, and if this has happened with a sufficient number of surplus wives, the original owner will find himself the patriarch, headman or chief of a new little town, and as the head of the clan, receive the lion's share in the dowry of all of the girl children and keep as much of the earnings of the boys as he sees fit. This African form of in-

vestment trust assures the thrifty native a comfortable old age, surrounded by every luxury.

It is a great disgrace to a native to have his woman run back to her family or tribe; usually the men strive to please the women and give them everything they earn. As the average native pays nothing whatever for his food, this means that brass pots, cloth, even silk, alarm clocks and umbrellas are now found throughout West Africa as evidences of their lord and master's desire to propitiate and keep on good terms with his women-folk.

In the old days—if they survived—the foreign traders who stayed long on the coast usually took a native wife, and one of the largest Nigerian and Coast Companies had the custom of rewarding a clerk who had served six months to the Head Agent's satisfaction by providing a native wife at the expense of the company. One of their officers told me it was really a very good plan, because they had found the clerks were better cared for and were nursed when they were ill while the children became employees of the company as they grew up. The women were usually perfectly satisfied, and had they not been so would have been free to leave.

Today I imagine few directorates of West African companies would approve such a plan; but in many isolated places such arrangements still occur.

I remember a case where a foreigner had two Mohammedans arrange a dowry for a very pretty Vai girl, and the girl agreeing, he paid them the ridiculous sum of thirty pounds sterling. The next day the girl left and the foreigner was out not only one wife but thirty pounds as well. The two rascals had paid the girl's family only nine pounds and divided the rest between themselves. The irony was that as the girl had refused to stay with her husband, native law provided that the dowry must be returned—it did not return to the foreigner, but to the two scamps. The foreign residents who knew the inside of the story shook with laughter for weeks over it.

Natives appear to be fond of their children, but in a different way from Westerners. They have no hesitancy in giving them away either to their white friends or to another native family, yet they are always affectionate in their actions toward their children and do not punish them severely.

The native clan system, whereby each individual shares with each other individual of the clan and has a right to demand clan assistance, has developed a great deal of selfishness between members of different clans. Natives will not help each other in trouble unless they are of the same clan. In fact, they seem to get a great deal of amusement from

the other man's difficulties, it being particularly funny because there is no danger of one's own clan having to shoulder the burden.

If crab, he mudder die;
What for big eye bunny cry?

This expresses the native attitude very well, and when a man is in the clutches of the police or in trouble with his master, his discomfiture is witnessed by his friends with yells of laughter and thigh-slapping approval, in which the culprit frequently finds a measure of comfort in the pride of being the important centre of so much disturbance.

When a traveller arrives at a native town in the interior the tradition and custom of West Africa requires that the chief or headman furnish the traveller with a hut to sleep in and with rice, palm oil and other food. In the old days hospitality and custom required that important visitors be furnished with one or more women as well. This custom still prevails in many parts of Africa as travellers and missionaries who have been embarrassed by it can testify. In return for these courtesies the traveller is expected to give the chief a "dash". In this way any present has come to be known as a dash, and in the language of the Coast, dash and giving are synonymous. A boy will say, "You dash me one

hat", or a workman, "dash me one leaf tobacco".

Chiefs visiting each other or a chief coming to pay his respects to an official or any foreigner visiting a chief, all give and expect dashes, and a man's importance is largely measured by the amount of the dash he gives. Thus a chief coming to the capital to pay his respects to the President will bring cows, ivory or similar things. He will also expect before he leaves to receive in return a dash from the President, the value of which will surpass the gifts he brought, because the President is "big past him". If an African wishes to show his personal superiority to the first giver, he will carefully return a dash of double value, thereby getting much quiet satisfaction from having done so.

When a chief gives a present to a paramount chief or high government official, the ritual gift of white country cloth, symbolic of good feeling, is always included. This etiquette of the dash is not to be confused with bribery, although it is a system which easily lends itself to such misuse.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMING OF THE BLACKS

In collecting traditions and legends of the tribes and in attempting to study and sort these out into possible paths of origin one is confronted with the most elusive and discouraging problem, but at the same time this work is the most interesting field of African study. One is constantly led on by the light of a will-o'-the-wisp where all appears logical and then proves impossible, or as suddenly, one stumbles on a still more interesting trail. In the beginning I made the usual mistake of discussing these questions with the educated African. Consciously or unconsciously, everyone I talked with was strongly alive to the lack of a written historical background such as other races, particularly the Western races, have preserved and to which they constantly refer. The consequence of this feeling is that what the educated African does not know, he imagines, mixing in a little of everything he has read with real and imaginary folklore of his own or far distant peoples, and

he serves this *mixtum compositum* with a sort of Bible story sauce to every inquirer as the true history of his people handed down to him by his immediate forefathers. For a long time I was misled and confused, not realizing the complex that coloured the tales I was collecting. I carefully gathered these stories, half persuaded that the West African represented the remains of a once highly developed central or west African civilization now become broken by wars and decadent; no longer able to cope successfully with climatic environment and now sunk back to a primitive state, retaining only in the secret societies or "Devil Bushes" the dim remembrances of sciences and past glories.

Eventually, I came to read as much as I could of the collected folklore, ethnology and references in the histories of other races to their early contacts with the negro and to seek less among the natives educated in the learning of the Western races and more among those educated in the learning of the Bush, who knew little or nothing of printed books. It is difficult to understand or correctly estimate the enormous influence of written history in every decision or course of action, and it is correspondingly more difficult for us to estimate the lack of such a history in the psychology of the African. In America we are trained in the history of governments and

the development of various forms of civil administration. Constantly we are made to refer back to and analyze economic causes operating among peoples whose descendants we are; but the African, strongly conscious of the conflict between his ancient tribal laws and conventions, and the conventions, laws and methods of thought of other races, is constantly at a loss and turns with increasing reluctance to Western guidance and Western history as his only present alternative.

The fact that these people in West Africa do not know their own history for more than a very short period, and that most of them know very little of the customs of the other tribes, explains why so many errors have been made by travellers who have written about them. Even in the tribal customs daily practised by the people, the reason why or beginning of the custom has frequently been lost. The Coast African who talks English knows less about these things than the bushman; but he mixes everything together, and the writer who takes it down makes history.

To be accurate one can only touch on things, offer suggestions and refer to undoubted historical material. The real history of Africa is yet to be written.

There is great doubt if there was ever an Old

Stone Age in the prehistory of West Africa. It seems more probable that the inhabitants, if there were any, went through a somewhat different course of development than that recorded in the prehistory of Europe. Certainly there have been but few, if any, finds of ancient implements, primitive hearths or drawings west of Nigeria. There are a few old stone images which show that fertility cults were early practised in West Africa. And one finds rubbed or polished stones, impure copper and bronze implements; but I never saw chipped flint or other chipped worked stone. The geological condition of the country, the heavy forest and jungle, may account for the scarcity of evidence of early cultures; but inasmuch as these prehistoric records have been found far to the north and far to the east, in places equally difficult of exploration, I believe that the tribal culture, as it now exists, was developed before the present tribesmen invaded the West Coast.

Gold is found throughout West Africa but it is flour gold, and the ancient workings found in various places are probably not more than a few hundred years old. They are largely, if not entirely, the attempts of the early European traders to wash the gold-bearing sands of ancient river channels and pockets. In West Africa the natives have always had plenty of bone and hard wood which would serve

admirably for spears, swords and knives; so they may never have used stone implements, even in the earliest times.

The climate of the West Coast with its heavy rains, humidity and luxuriant vegetation would naturally be destructive of ancient remains excepting stone or copper; but scientific archæological investigation is yet to come to the West Coast, and it is impossible to pronounce a final opinion in advance of such systematic study.

There are reports by natives and unscientific travellers which may indicate a culture antedating that of the present inhabitants in Liberia. One of these stories which may substantiate this is the tale of a great wall extending at a right angle from the coast back into the interior for a number of miles. I have talked to natives and citizens who claim to have seen this wall and I carefully inquired as to its height and construction, that is, whether it was made of large stones or small ones and whether the stones were cut. Apparently, if ever there were a real wall made by human hands, it has been overgrown, partly buried in places and partly broken down, but that there was some sort of a mark or boundary which was encountered by the Vais when they came into the country and which was used by them to delimit the territories of two of their tribal divisions, there

seems to be no question. The length of that dividing wall is difficult to determine without an expedition which would follow up any traces right through the bush. I had thought it was a natural reef or outcrop which had been seized upon as a boundary line and being a natural feature, this would be a most desirable and opportune division point, but the line of the natural strata and outcroppings of rock is normally at a slight angle which just misses paralelling the coast and therefore such a wall would cut almost directly across the general configuration of the strata. The native stories which I collected say that the wall was built by the spirits; most certainly it was not built by the present natives themselves. On the question of its construction and the shape of the stones, I never got a satisfactory answer. As the natives never cut or square stone, they did not understand what I meant; so their answer that in some places it was built of very great stones, meant nothing. The construction of a wall of this length would indicate a very considerable people under a strong government and it does not seem possible that such an ancient nation could have existed and have so completely disappeared without other trace or remains. It seems probable therefore that whatever the "wall" may ultimately prove to be, it will in all likelihood be in great part at least a natural for-

mation or fault which may or may not have been improved or added to by man. I had intended to explore this wall but illness prevented and I was invalided out of Africa.

The other story, or Vai tradition, is more interesting, although not as surprising scientifically as the wall: Very long ago the people who lived in a place two days and a half walk from the coast had completed arrangements for the annual dance, which is held when the boys come out of the "Devil Bush". The chief and headmen sat on their stools; the drummer knelt over his drum, and two or three boys stood ready to dance; but at that moment the spirits, angered by some impious act, turned these people into stone, and in a sacred Devil Bush there is to be seen today, "dem stone people".

There are also other half-told tales and suggestions of statues; but if any exist, they are held sacred and are only to be found within the Devil Bushes, where at the present time it is an utter impossibility for anyone to enter who is not a member of the Bush Association.

Of ancient prehistoric remains, therefore, there is little that can be definitely recorded at the present time.

Of interest to paleontologists is a rock near River Cess. On the surface of this rock is a line of what

appears to be human footprints and whether they are those of the giant sloth which have been mistaken for human footprints by unscientific observers in so many other places, remains for scientific examination to determine, but the fact that there is a rock showing such marking is extremely curious because Liberia has practically no sedimentary rocks. The Coast is so old, geologically speaking, that its mountain ranges and sedimentary strata have long since been torn down and washed away by erosion and rain until only the ribs of the mountains are left. There is no coal and no limestone; only a few red sandstone boulders which are so old that no fossils are contained in them.

The erosion and the geologic age of the present surface strata probably accounts for and explains the wide distribution of the flour gold found throughout the country. This also explains the present system of working diamond deposits or mining for tin in use on the West Coast. There do not appear to be any blue clay pipes such as contain the diamonds of South Africa, and both in Liberia and further to the eastward in the Gold Coast colony where diamonds have been found, they are being washed out of alluvial deposits. Where tin has been found and where tin workings are operated today in West Africa the particles of the metal are in little

rounded balls like shot. These are recovered from ancient river channels and the pockets and bars in those old channels where the metal collected as it was washed down by the streams. Today those old channels are frequently buried fifty or one hundred feet below the present surface of the surrounding country. All of this work is placer mining, the original rocks being long since broken up and gone.

Iron ore, hematite, magnetite, manganese, mica, azurite, diorite, gneiss, and old Plutonic rocks are the principal minerals and formations that are found between Cape Verde and Nigeria. It is not until one gets to Eastern Nigeria that any coal deposits are found. In Liberia one sometimes encounters natives who will bring in samples of rocks which they consider heavy and therefore probably valuable and in this way a number of samples of lead-silver or galena have been obtained. It has been impossible, however, to locate the source of this ore and one interesting theory is that possibly there was an ancient working where the silver had been found and that because silver, among early peoples, was sacred to the moon god, this old working has been made a "Devil Bush" and is sacred to the cult of the moon. Whether this is idle speculation or the real explanation of the secret of the source of this ore, I would be reluctant to state, but it is a fact that any

visitor can get galena ore in Monrovia and perhaps someone will be fortunate enough some day to locate its source.

Since in our present state of knowledge it appears more probable that the West African tribesman is a newcomer, it is interesting to consider a little what is historically known of the origin of the blacks.

The first time that negroes are mentioned in history is during the reign of Pepi II, Neferkere, Pharaoh of Egypt, 2738-2644 B. C. During his long reign, which was probably the longest of any king in history, the Egyptian caravans were pushing further south into Kush, as Ethiopia was then called, and one of his officials named Khnumhotep says that he went to Ethiopia and Puenet eleven times. Four hundred years earlier, when Pharaoh Zoser determined to push Egyptian dominion south into Nubia, there were no negroes in that country and the inhabitants were a people who are classified ethnologically as being of Hamitic stock, the same as the Egyptians were themselves; but in the time of Pepi II the negroes had come northward into that country, as is proved by examination of the skulls and bones found in graves of this period. From this time onward the negroes kept on towards the north and their penetration of Egypt's southern border appears to have been both peaceful and otherwise,

for history speculates as to the possibility of there having been a negro invasion and conquest during the troublesome times at the end of Pepi's reign. At any rate, during succeeding periods of Egyptian history negroes are constantly found in all walks of Egyptian life. In much later times, in the eighth century, B. C., in the Ethiopians of the south are to be found the Pharaohs of the twenty-fifth Dynasty of Egypt, and it was from a campaign directed against their capital, Meroe, situated far in the Soudan, that the army of fifty thousand men led by Darius of Persia was to retire in confusion from a defeat which was the beginning of the Persian downfall in Egypt and which effectually stopped for all time the Persian advance to the south.

Archæologists believe that the negro is a newcomer in South Africa. The petroglyphs found in the Kalahari and the engraving, lately reported, on a basaltic rock in the Western Transvaal of a white rhinoceros, together with rock pictures of giraffe, antelope and similar veldt animals found in the southern Libyan desert, with their similarity to modern Bushman drawings and rock pictures, offer strong support to the suggestion that the negro has existed and developed in the ancient grasslands of Africa, retreating southward as the present desert areas dried up and became unfitted to support life,

after the last ice age in Europe, when the Saharan and Libyan climates no longer permitted sufficient moisture for vegetation. In Palæolithic times the negro did reach southern Europe, and two of the skeletons found at Mentone in the Grotto of Grimaldi are those of negroids. But when the changing conditions broke down the land bridges across the Mediterranean and the Sahara desert barrier was gradually formed, the negroes disappeared, to be heard of no more until history records them in the third millennium B.C., as I have already related.

Some writers have advanced the theory that the negro developed in lands south of India in the fabled continent of Lemuria and thus expanded south-eastwards across the islands of Melanesia to Australia and even across the Pacific to form the Caribs of the Americas; that negro tribes seeking new land as their own old continent broke up and slowly subsided beneath the waters of the present Indian Ocean, journeyed in boats before the trade winds to the east coast of Africa.

I prefer the theory that the negro stock developed in isolation since Palæolithic times in Africa, and that other negro or negroid peoples of the world result from a parallelism of conditions rather than by diffusion or migration. In any event, whichever of the two theories one prefers, the fact remains agree-

able to both, that every indication and even the traditions of living tribes point to an origin to the eastward, that is, towards the great African lakes and in the country between them and the Indian Ocean, and it seems probable that it was in this district that primitive men of the racial stock that was to become the negroes of today developed from family and family clan into their first tribal organizations.

From their contact with Egypt nearly five thousand years ago and from their contact with eastern traders at Zimbabwe they undoubtedly accepted as part of their own culture many of the religious cults whose traces are so puzzling to the archæologist today.

Several of the stone images I mention have been brought to American museums within the last year, and in all except one case, have been "killed" by breaking, just as our Indians always broke anything used in burials or other ceremonies where it was desired to let the spirit of the object go free. In the West African stone figures there are holes over the heart, abdomen, or other part in which the "medicine" was placed because the spirit entered the image from the medicine. In the present-day wooden figures the medicine is enclosed in a little leather packet and tied on, just as it is worn by nearly every native man, woman or child on arm, leg, or breast.

In the case of a wooden figure of a dead twin the medicine is worn on the breast.

The words, Devil Bush, Country Devil, Devil Society, or Woman Devil, frequently used in West Africa, must not be understood as having any connection with black magic or Devil worship. These expressions are idioms of the Coast and have been established by the foreigners as the English name of the native bush associations, medicine men and medicine women. Native religious beliefs are not Devil worship by any means. It cannot be denied that black magic and weird forms of worship do exist in the Bush, but they are to be considered as entirely apart from ordinary native doings. Such things are feared and hated by most of the tribesmen. White magic or sympathetic magic, as we call it today, and all sorts of odd superstitions are part of the daily life of the people, and more than most other lands. West Africa remains today self-bound in superstition; a place where the thought force of ages of half knowledge, of wrong concepts, of fear and hate, holds and destroys its people. There the unreal becomes the real, and there magic is a thing of everyday life and action.

CHAPTER VII

WHEN THE COUNTRY DEVIL WALKS

As with all primitive people, the cults of the Liberian tribes are centred in their secret societies. The names of the leaders are kept secret and knowledge is withheld from all but the elect of the Devil Bush.

Passing through the country trails I have encountered side paths which led to the Devil Bushes, and invariably there were marks or warnings to apprise the traveller that the way was barred. The common form of such a signal is two crossed wands stuck in the middle of the path, the tops of which have rags, feathers, or some similar stuff wrapped and tied around them, so that they cannot be mistaken for ordinary sticks. Your servants and carriers hurry by, careful not to glance down the path. When the Devil Bush is located on a high hill or out of the usual paths, it is not always so clearly marked—at least not to European eyes. But where the land is flat and the bush is simply a reserved

space in the forest, a wicker fence is frequently woven around either the entire place or the major portion, and always such a fence is erected on each side of any paths that may approach it.

In addition to these sacred precincts there are several mountains which, strictly speaking, do not appear to be Devil Bushes. The natives are reluctant to approach these places; but the witch doctors go there for purposes of divination, sacrifice, or some other special ceremony.

One night a tribesman recounted to me a legend of bush warfare that ended on such a sacred mountain. Crouched before me, with fiery gesture and dramatic intensity, he reacted his story. No narrator can convey through the printed page the force of these vivid pictures. Spellbound I forgot the present and fought with him that savage war; heard with him those awful yells; saw the sunlight flash on the flying spears and over all the smoke of burning huts. We gathered at last, a little huddle of wounded, despairing survivors, high up on the face of a rocky hill; the jungle and our enemies behind, a precipice in front—nothing remained but slavery or the last desperate slaughter. The chief stood up and spoke, "We finish. You be meat in de bush. I go". Turning he leaped from that rock and died. We made sacrifice to the gods.

There is one characteristic of the African tribesman which cannot be overestimated and that is his bravery. In everyday life the native is noisy, even contentious, but his nature is peaceful and very rarely does he resort to physical violence or bloodshed. In a fight or in a tribal war, however, that same peaceable native, once roused, will never give up as long as any chance remains, and even when all hope is lost will fight to the bitter end.

It is this spirit of bravery combined with loyalty to their leaders, that has enabled West African governments to rule over great stretches of territory, in which the power to enforce authority is maintained by native police or native troops, and these native soldiers, when treated with anything like justice, never hesitate at the ugliest kind of jungle warfare, nor is their loyalty ever in question.

One of the first things a foreigner hears about is the mystery of the Devil Bush. No stranger learns much about it; but the weird tales and garbled accounts of the proceedings of the Devil Bush which have come to be believed as true, make up a great part of the newcomer's introduction to West Africa. I have talked to many men who have worked among natives and had to do with native education, but it is a rare exception to meet a man who really knows anything about it, and missionaries usually assure

one that it is very bad and should not be allowed; but when pressed for a further explanation, never give any facts. For a long time it is an elusive and fascinating mystery to which is ascribed witchcraft, poison, and queer and awful ceremonies. Its influence is a part of every tragedy and seems to dominate the natives like some brooding unseen oppression. Out in the bush, surrounded by the brown-green silence of the jungle, one will hear the throb of a distant drum or the wail of an elephant horn and say, "Devil Bush". The mystery is further increased when you attempt to question a native about it or about the queer little marks on the back of his neck, and receive only stolid silence or smiling evasion for an answer. Older residents will tell you the natives do not talk of these mysterious secrets because they are afraid; if one of them talks, death is the penalty, and death, as administered by the Devil Bush, is not pleasant. One story goes that the violator of these secrets is tied by the arms and legs to four bent tree tops which are then released and the four quivering sections of his body left for the birds of the air. There are tales of secret societies, of the poison of sasswood, alligator gall, rice root, and even a filthier poison made of putrid human flesh. So fearful are the people of alligator gall poisoning that a law was passed which provided that

the gall bladder of every alligator (crocodile) killed must be removed and thrown into running water.

Most mysterious and most secret is the society of the Boh. These adepts in Bush magic can think a man dead. Seated in solemn convention, the sacred fire burning in the centre of the circle, these magicians weigh the charges against this man or that. "Death". Slowly begin the incantations, deeper and deeper each member sinks into group thought, gradually those thoughts reach out and join until the circle is locked in one. Dimly as on a clouded screen that power draws the picture of the condemned man's face before them. "Death", the group intelligence says, "Die on such and such a day", and the rhythm of the drum slows and throbs until their hearts slow and beat in unison. "Die, die, die", wills the thought; slowly with every bit of concentrated power the group-will repeats, and repeats again until the single group consciousness sees the man "through the veil". Dead? If that man is a tribesman he most assuredly dies.

When I first went to West Africa two men had just died under mysterious circumstances. It was whispered that they had violated a Devil Bush, and carried off an image from its shrine.

Just at that time there was considerable excitement caused by stories in foreign newspapers about

the Leopard Society and human sacrifice. When I knew Africa better, I learned a little about the Devil Bush, but that little was enough to convince me that a study of it would repay any African administrator or educator, as in its system is found the easy, natural, normal method of educational approach for the development of the African mind. In some ways the African negro is not very different from other people. He likes to belong to secret societies because by membership in them he finds diversion, security and assistance in time of need, and many of his societies are closely affiliated with his religious beliefs.

To the Devil Bush the tribesman sends his children at any time after they are six years old. The girls go to one bush, which is in charge of old women. In some tribes this is called the Gri-gri Bush. To another he sends his boys, and in the same tribes this is called the Poro Bush. The children live in small towns in these bushes and there they learn everything that a young native must know to be fitted for life. The girls are taught planting, basket-weaving, pot making, cooking and simple medicines, and when they are older, they are taught all about maternity and the tribal beliefs and rituals, which must be carefully carried out if they are to be wives and mothers. To be a mother is to arrive at the highest distinction in their lives. They believe that

the more children a woman has, the greater happiness will be hers. The boys are taught not only all of the simple medicines and culture necessary for their health and life, but the history of the tribe and of the tribal ancestors, and every boy is taught all the variations of native customary tribal law. They are taught to make speeches, and I never saw or heard of an African native who was not only a natural, but a well trained orator. A tribesman never pleads ignorance of the law, excepting when he is confronted with the "civilized" law of the coast.

After the preliminary education has been completed, there is a choice of further instruction for some of the boys, particularly the sons of headmen and chiefs, and it is in this higher education that these selected boys acquire some special trade such as metal working and doctoring or they receive the training which will fit them for the administrative and executive government of the tribe. The boys who have taken up medicine are taught differently from the others, as medicine in West Africa, as among all primitive races in the world, is a mixture of the actual knowledge of native herbs and poisons, together with a very complete course in sympathetic magic.

Sympathetic magic can best be described as a logical deduction drawn from a false premise, as

for instance, the native, having observed that frogs come out after a rain, concludes that the frogs have brought on the rain, and therefore, if one catches a frog and heats him slowly over a small fire, he will bring on rain to cool himself; or that women, being the source of new life, are the logical persons to plant seed that it may germinate and grow new plants. But in addition to this magic, the native has acquired a real knowledge of certain simple drugs and courses of treatment. Fevers, for example, are not only treated by incantations and magic, but also by the use of certain herbs that will produce a violent perspiration; or when that fails, by confinement in a small hut, in which steam is created by throwing hot stones in water until the hut is filled with steam, and thus the patient is given a vapour bath.

I was interested in the native drugs, and after making exhaustive inquiries about them, learned that most of them are well known to Western medicine. We administer them, however, only after they have been refined chemically, and some of their more violent, and possibly more dangerous, effects have been counteracted by neutralizing admixtures.

In addition to practices which are primarily designed for the aversion of evil and the curing of disease, there is a different type of magic which has to do with the detection of malefactors. Most of this

magic works by way of what the West has learned to call the ordeal.

The most common form of the ordeal is the sasswood. The sasswood is a tree indigenous to Africa south of the Soudan, that has a poison so irritating that the slightest scratch by a green twig of this tree will cause a painful and inflamed wound. The juice from the bark, when mixed in certain proportions with water and other liquids, is a nicely balanced emetic. The persons under suspicion of crime are first subjected to a series of magic rites and incantations by the doctor, and when their minds have been sufficiently agitated, they are compelled to drink from the sasswood mixture. The magic part of the ceremony now becomes apparent because the psychology of the native is such that he thoroughly believes, if he has lied, he will not be able to vomit, and he believes as thoroughly that if he has told the truth, he will vomit at once. It takes just that mental belief to render the sasswood effective, and the culprit is usually detected by his failure to eject the poisonous draft, and by his begging for the mercy of the antidote which will relieve him.

There are other ordeals which are not so easily explained. One of them is the plunging of the arm into a bowl of boiling oil to extract a stone from the bottom of the bowl. In this case the test is whether

the arm is burned or not. Why some natives can perform this feat without burning their arms, I never learned, unless we accept that it is some little understood exercise of mental force. But it seems to be akin to the ceremony of dancing barefooted on red hot stones which is performed in the South Sea Islands, that has been witnessed by responsible scientists but for which no other explanation has been forthcoming.

A foreign trader told me that on one of his trips to the interior he had missed some of his goods and reported the theft to the chief. After hearing the complaint the chief took a small horn powder box which he carried about his neck and from it extracted a powder which he compelled each of the suspected men to take like snuff. The trader told me that two of the boys immediately showed every sign of discomfort with tears starting from their eyes. They choked and sputtered exactly as if they had snuffed pepper. The other boys showed no effects whatever. The two, who had shown the symptoms related, immediately confessed the theft and took the trader and chief to a place in the bush where they had buried their loot.

There are an infinite variety of methods of ordeal, and apparently they vary not only with the tribes, but with different parts of central and west Africa.

To the Devil Bushes the ways are barred except to the initiate. Poisoned thorns lurk in the paths for unwary hands, and poisoned splinters are placed ankle high in the deep worn trail. A man eats from the same bowl as his host and dies. Filthy disease attacks his eyes—perhaps he drew his blanket over them in sleep or brushed against a spray of flowers. Sister, wife, brother or son may have placed the "medicine", for who would dare to disobey an order from the sacred bush.

There is no doubt that hypnotism plays a large part in the sacred science of the bush, especially mass or group hypnotism. This last has been but little studied in the West unless we consider the direction of propaganda as used in the World War; but in Africa it is always active. I am convinced, however, that unless the object of these bush attacks believes, he cannot be injured; but the African does believe. He believes with all his heart and soul. The foreigner is of course more or less immune except from poisons. Nevertheless the effects of a malevolent bush will be actively felt by him if only in the reaction of the Africans in his employ. "Boom, boom, boom", go the drums, far off and menacing, and the boys glance at each other, drop their eyes, and hurry to assure you, "He no talk, he play, Massah, jes

play". You make no reply, but in your heart you know better.

There is another kind of magic which we in the West call black magic. This has to do with "putting a witch on a man". It is firmly believed in by all of the natives, and even the civilized governments of the Coast have laws against it. Its methods, many and varied, are based on the pseudo-scientific theory of sympathetic magic. If a man wants another's position, he can hire a witch doctor to turn the man's employer against him in order to have the other man dismissed and himself promoted. A woman can revenge herself on another woman by having the evil eye cast on a child so that it gets sick or dies, and a curse can be cast on the crops. On the other hand, these same witch doctors will accept fees to avert these evils, and a man or woman who suspects that an enemy is trying to put a witch on them, will pay a witch doctor to protect them, to cure the bewitched, or to take the blight from the fields.

It is a curious thing to study and come to know somewhat of the extent of this old magical science. It has existed in the childhood of every race, and many races still believe in it. It was not so many years ago that a witch was burned in New England; in Latin countries, among the peasants, the evil eye is dreaded as much today as it was a thousand years

ago. In the Near East and in Asia magic and witchcraft still live. It is perhaps not strange to find the practice of witchcraft so strongly intrenched in West Africa. I remember a case that came up in the Monrovian courts a few years ago because witchcraft had been used to obtain the dismissal of a native headman or labour superintendent of one of the foreign shipping firms.

In West Africa the people live and move about their daily tasks under this constant fear, accepting as true the weirdest and wildest ramifications of black magic. After a few experiences with the people the foreigner comes to accept it also, though not in the sense that they do. For if the foreigner is to succeed with these people, he must consider it as an actual and vital force in their affairs that must be calculated as if it were as real to him as it is to them.

There was the case of the engineer who received word from one of his best men that someone had put a witch on him and that he must die within a certain number of days unless his employer would help him. The engineer laughed and sent word to the man to forget it; to return to work, because that sort of thing was foolishness. The engineer stopped laughing a few days later because at the appointed time the man died. Perhaps he was scared dead, but

the point is that a valuable man died who could have been saved had his employer known enough about Africa to have had the "witch" removed.

In the Boozie country, at Salliyé and Naama principally, there is a peculiar fish cult. There in the open streams a small fish not unlike trout in appearance comes to be fed by the women. Naturally fish are taboo with these people and a down country messenger who caught and ate some died very mysteriously shortly afterwards. At certain seasons these fish go away and when they return some months later are greeted with great rejoicing by the people.

These and other happenings illustrate the clever use of poisons, hypnotism and group suggestion. Often it is not clear which was used. In West Africa one is wise who learns the country and moves softly in accordance with native belief and tribal custom.

I remember the following tale related by an educated man, who while travelling in the hinterland had come face to face one day with a celebrated witch doctor. In some manner he gave this doctor to understand he did not believe in his reputed ability. That afternoon the doctor came to his camp and said to him, "You don't think I can show you many things". The man, not wishing to give offence, replied, "I don't know whether you can or

not". The doctor said, "Look, what do you see?" The man looked, and said he saw the jungle and the road from the camp. The doctor bid him look again. The man told me that as he looked the jungle faded away, and in place of it was an open plain with a herd of cattle moving about and cropping the grass. Then the doctor said, "Look now", and as he looked, the plain faded, and it grew dark. He seemed to be standing in a cloud of bees which darkened the sky and shut out everything but a little circle around himself and the doctor. He told me their buzzing was so loud that he felt he had to shout to be heard. Then the doctor said, "I will give you one more thing because now you know what I can do: I promise you, that from today until you reach Monrovia, rain will never fall while you are marching". With that, the doctor went away.

My friend told me that although it rained every day and night, with heavy sheets of rain striking the jungle on all sides of him, that never a drop of rain fell on him nor his caravan. He confessed that after two or three days he began to believe in the thing, and that once when it was raining in the morning, he decided to start anyway, just to see what would happen. When the carriers picked up their loads the rain stopped. After this experience he said he was glad to be out of that

man's country, and that nothing could ever induce him to go back again. Coincidence, men will say, and it probably was; but no native will believe for one instant that it was anything but the powers of the Bush.

Many of their beliefs have given rise to various forms of taboo, or as the natives call it, medicine. An act which one native can do without fear, would be fatal if performed by another. In the same family, for instance, one boy would not hesitate to shoot a crocodile but his brother dares not kill one for fear it would excite the wrath of the spirits. On the other hand, the first brother might well refuse to cut down a particular tree, which the second brother would be free to chop down without regard or hesitation. Again, as at Sugaree, where the crocodile is believed to be the protective spirit of the village, no townsman would kill a crocodile in the vicinity, yet beyond a certain boundary would join in a crocodile hunt. In the Boozie country, referred to elsewhere, fish are worshipped; yet tribesmen from the town where this cult is strongest will eat salt fish when working on the coast.

Thus it will be seen that totemism, as now practised in Liberia, has long since lost its original simplicity and has developed to that borderland between later totemism and primitive religion where mem-

bership in a Bush society with a cult totem and corresponding taboos is but one step from the worship of the cult figure itself. Notwithstanding that primitive totemism has passed, the system of interdiction in West Africa is unlimited in scope: there are tribal taboos, clan taboos and personal taboos. Many of the difficulties encountered by the inexperienced foreigner are occasioned by his commands, the fulfilment of which would be the violation of a taboo about which he knows nothing. It may be exasperating for one of your best men to say, "I no fit make dat"; but the experienced man, to save time, will give the same order to someone else, instead of arguing about it or insisting on the impossible.

One plantation owner of my acquaintance had a foreign employee who knew nothing of the customs of Africa and who cared less. By cutting down trees, this man violated the boundary of a Devil Bush. The owner of the plantation, after a great deal of "palava"—in which the government interfered to assist him—was able, by making a ritual gift of cows, powder, tobacco and salt, accompanied by an apology and the removal of the employee in question from the country, to avert what might have been not only serious consequences to his enterprise but the certain death of his employee.

The Leopard Society is a curious secret association which begins somewhere in French or Portuguese territory and whose ramifications extend along the entire West Coast as far as the Congo or further. I doubt whether it is a single organization, but consider that more likely it represents a series of loosely connected but independent groups, which have grown up as a member of this cult moved to another place and started a little organization of his own. In this way, by gradual extension, it has spread like a poisonous weed whose seeds are blown by the winds.

To understand the fascination of the Leopard Society one has to go deep down into the roots of mankind's early beliefs. In West Africa totemism and animism are the fundamentals of native belief and life. I have told the story of the tradition of the origin of the Krus and all the other tribes or clans have legends which connect their early members with elephants, deer, hawks, snakes, and other animals. Another phase of this belief suggests that the spirits of their departed ancestors take refuge in animal form, as in the shape of a leopard, a buffalo or an elephant.

In tribal West Africa, as in ancient European customs, the ceremony of adoption into a clan or family through a ritual of one sort or another signifying rebirth, has led to many curious and interest-

ing practices. Remnants of these old pagan rites survive in America and Europe today in the ceremonies which formally admit candidates to membership in some of our religious organizations and lodges. In Africa the Leopard Society used a similar ritual which united the new member with a leopard clan and engendered in him the power to change himself into a leopard and assume the spirit and habits of a leopard. This initiation was accompanied by a ceremony in which human flesh was eaten, and these human leopards, to carry out the symbolism of their cult, dressed themselves in leopard skins, masked with a leopard head, and with a sandal or shoe on their feet which was so shaped on the bottom as to leave a mark in soft dirt or mud like the track of a leopard, as he stalked his human victims. On the hands were worn a sort of glove with iron or steel springs which ran down each finger on the inside terminating in a point shaped like a leopard's claw. These springs would force the glove to remain closed, and it took considerable muscular effort in the fingers to hold them open. When the "leopards" pounced on a victim the springs in the two gloves would cause the iron claws to close exactly as the claws of a great cat shut and hold when it pounces on its victim.

The various European governments, as well as

the Liberian government, have taken decisive action to stamp out this organization. On most of the West Coast just the possession of Leopard Society regalia is held by the courts to be proof of membership and sufficient evidence for a life term in jail. In so far as I know, the Leopard Society never attacked whites, and it is questionable how many natives were ever killed; but the reign of terror during the heyday of the organization was sufficient justification for the strong measures that were taken to stamp it out.

The African bush is full of societies and queer cults. One is constantly speculating over stories and symbols which suggest that an ancient belief, such as the worship of Astarte or Tanit or perhaps something from old Judea, has been remembered and carried by no one knows whom, until it survives only as a symbol or fragment of ritual, the origin of which the natives themselves do not know.

On the devil masks used by the women doctors are frequently carved two horns rising in the shape of a crescent moon; again the masks themselves present a carved wooden face whose features are decidedly different from those of the West African native. Nearly always these masks and the fertility cult statues show a thin, sharp nose, with a decided

hump, and a small mouth with nothing to indicate the full lipped negro.

Again one finds certain members of the Devil Bush who recognize with startled surprise such symbols as a cross within a circle or the seal of Solomon with its double triangle signifying creation. One native high in the secrets of the bush associations once drew with a pencil one of the rather more complicated figures referred to as a Pythagorean symbol which is known to students of ancient masonry. The curious thing about this drawing was that the figures inscribed by the native in the squares resembled the Hebrew characters anciently used. From this and other things similar to it, there appears to be no question but that some very ancient form of Masonic ritual and Masonic symbols are recognized and used by the native societies just as similar remnants or primitive forms of Masonry have been reported from the interior of Asia and found engraved on the bases of Egyptian obelisks.

Today, however, it is practically impossible to sort out these origins and cults. A people without written history, even with the extraordinary memories that characterize primitive people, forget much in two thousand years; although, as most students know, the last thing any race forgets is the name and ritual of its god or gods. Here in West Africa

Play devil.

Liberian frontier guards—Franco-Liberian boundary.

Warrei, the oldest game in Africa.

Dancing is the very life of the African tribesmen.

we find gods and spirits of every class and kind, whose names are lost, served by a complicated ritual that hints at survival from North African or Semitic cults but whose sequence is broken and lost in the shadows of time.

There are many kinds of devils in Liberia, but the one the foreigner sees is the "Play Devil", and even with Play Devils there are more than one kind. The most common type is a masked figure mounted on stilts, dressed in a curious costume with a high pointed hat. The identity of the man on stilts is a carefully guarded secret; even his voice is changed by a reed or other appliance placed inside of the mouth, which makes it high-pitched and squeaky. This Devil comes from a bush into a native town with his musicians and a "speaker" or master of ceremonies. The agility he displays is truly remarkable and the dance executed on the stilts surprisingly good. Whenever the dancer is tired, he sits down on the top of a house to rest; from there he carries on a monologue or sometimes a dialogue with his master of ceremonies. This is largely composed of crude sayings and personal allusions to the tender points of some of the townspeople. It is always received with roars of laughter and great applause.

Another form of devil dance that is a weird spectacle is the dance of the Women Devils. The dancers,

usually two or three, are covered with a long gown or robe of black raffia fibre; the arms and hands are covered with black gloves; the feet and legs are also covered. On the head is worn a wooden mask like a helmet that fits down to the shoulders. These masks are two feet or more in height and sometimes are carved so as to show two horns bending upward in a crescent from the front. The medicine in which the supposed spirit dwells is tied on to these wooden headdresses or masks in the form of little leather bags, two or three inches square. Leopards' teeth are also usually fastened on these masks. In one hand the dancer holds a small bundle of fibre like a little switch.

In a dance of this kind the spectators form a circle; but the circle must not be closed. Always a small lane is kept open. The musicians are composed of women, but sometimes of both sexes. Their instruments consist of drums and rattles. The rattles are extremely interesting, and I have often thought they would make a good addition to a modern jazz band. They are composed of a gourd over which is loosely drawn a net of grass fibre, on each mesh of which is a shell or hard seed. When the net is pulled tight, these strike together against the hard polished surface of the gourd and give out a peculiar loud swish, swish, swish. From this

sound they take their name, Sa-sa. In Haiti a similar rattle is called cha-cha, which indicates that both the instrument and name were brought from West Africa. The dancing, which is done to extremely fast time, is accompanied by much rigid jumping and threatening motions of the switch. Behind each dancer is a woman attendant with a rolled-up mat who carefully picks up any article or piece of fibre that may be dropped by her particular devil and is ready with the mat to cover her charge in case the robes become disarranged. Apparently, under no circumstances must any part of the body of the dancer be exposed, and it would appear that this custom has its origin in the belief that a spirit is supposed to have possessed the dancer but will remain only so long as the magical dress is intact. To the dancing the natives sing a chant in time to the music. It is a fascinating sight, this circle of dark faces, the wild fast music and the weird raffia-robed and masked figures.

There are other devils in the Liberian rain forest, devils of a far more serious and sinister kind. When the witch doctor rises above conjuring the individual and the family clan, when his influence goes beyond teaching the boys and curing the sick, then we see the beginnings of a high priesthood and some cult rising to preeminence. This progression has already

taken place among some of the Liberian tribes; but so little is really accessible for study, and so reticent are the blacks, that much that has happened in the past, or indeed that is happening now, can only be understood by analogy, as bits of information are pieced together. We know that in some parts of the interior there is a Big Devil—the devil "you must not see". At certain seasons that appear, roughly, to coincide with the time for reaping or spring planting, the "Devil walks". Travellers are seriously warned to wait; to keep off certain trails. No carriers are to be had, and all sorts of difficulties foretold. If the traveller insists on proceeding, he is warned that should he chance to encounter the Big Devil on the road, he must get off the trail into the bush, and that he must wait until the cortège has passed before venturing to move on. Under no circumstances must he try to look. In a village the traveller will observe suppressed excitement, unexplained activity, and fearful glances cast by the women and children at the bush; a servant will whisper the Big Devil is coming that night. The women and children get out of sight and carefully close the doors of the huts. Mats are pulled over holes and windows, and the white man finds himself shut in and warned not to go out or even dare look out. "You see him, you finish". Music like small

pipes playing, and drums, the scuffle and movement of a passing crowd, bare feet slapping the dust. The Big Country Devil has passed.

Native women go softly at these times. When necessity compels them to enter the forest, they sing or slap their thighs as they walk, to give warning of their presence. Should a Country Devil be walking, the woman scurries off the trail and huddles face down in the thicket. If she sees him she dies.

Not yet has the priest-king put in an appearance on the Liberian stage for in no tribe have I heard of a devil-chief; but as high priest of fertility, vying in importance with the tribal chief, coming at night in secret state to consult and advise the official ruler, the Big Country Devil to the tribe is a person of undisputed power over the secret of life.

In connection with the Big Country Devil that you must not see, there is always used when he walks abroad a special music which appears to be played on something like the pipes of Pan. Most African music is more remarkable for its rhythm and monotony than for its beauty and harmony; but the piping music played for the Country Devil has a cadenced beauty which is entirely different from anything used by the natives on ordinary occasions. I wonder whether that music was originally brought with some ancient ritual; if there is here in this frag-

ment of soft elfin harmony the ghost of a hymn to the sun that welcomed his rising in ancient Egypt, or a dim echo from a ziggurat in Ur, when the white-robed throng greeted the moon-god as the great temple stood clear in the full moonlight of Chaldea.

I had a boy who was high in the Devil societies and versed in the lore of the Bush. Late at night, when everyone was asleep, I have heard him playing to himself a low melody on a harp. I afterward saw the harp and found that it was not the usual Y-shaped forked stick with seven strings, with the base mounted in the top of a half gourd to be held against the chest for a sounding board; but it was more like a zither, with a great shallow gourd at one end. The music he played with its descending half tones and divisions was as soft and sweet as water tinkling over tiny glasses, and was based on a system which could not be reproduced in Western music with its more limited range of harmony. This exquisite melody was so soft and so beguiling that it was like something not of this earth at all.

Speculation leads one down strange corridors of thought, but the music, the ritual of the moon, the horns on the headdresses, and the double triangle of Solomon inevitably lead one back to the tradition of an eastern origin of the blacks.

Who dwelt in the once great, now ruined, city of Zimbabwe? What was the name and ritual of its god? The tales of the traders of old Sabæa number their voyages; but do not reveal the names of the inhabitants of the eastern coast. The Sea People of the Mediterranean quested far in their search for gold, myrrh, ebony and the incense tree. We know their warriors and priests spent long months in the far-off land of Puenet, now probably British Somaliland. Is it not possible that the worship of Ishtar or Isis was carried to the east coast by these old voyagers, and from there through two or three thousand years has drifted in fragments through the tribes who have wandered slowly westward?

Notwithstanding the influx of Soudanese negroids and their probable early contacts with Carthage, the Punic cults do not appear to have taken root in West Africa. Melkarth, the great god of Carthage, started out in life as an Easterner expressing the strength and fertility principle of the sun worshipped in the aspect of a bull. Tradition and history draw the Phœnician and his colonist the Carthaginian in harsh lines. Cruelty and bloodshed represented their concept of power. In their hands the more kindly old fertility god of the East developed into the brazen, bull-headed idol whose interior was a blazing furnace. All the wholesome joy of life of

the kindred cult of Adonis was forgotten and the Carthaginian god triumphed as the terrible centre of a sumptuous and awful ritual in which the people sacrificed their first born to the flames. There was nothing but horror for the negro in such a cult. I have heard of child sacrifice in Liberia in time of adversity, when certain strong "medicine" was needed; but it never has been usual, nor did such details as I was able to obtain resemble the ritual of Melkarth.

Tanit, the other great cult of north-west Africa, was a form of Ishtar. When the worship was brought from Asia Minor and set up in Carthage, it may have been a reasonably happy fertility cult; but, again, the morbid cruelty of the Carthaginian moulded his god to his own image. Tanit became the highly specialized cult of the bi-sexual, self-fertilized principle of creation. This father-mother god was served by eunuch priests with perfumed hair and painted faces. The temples were filled with sacred prostitutes. This sort of nastiness has no place in the negro mentality. Tanit's single triangle appealed to him far less than Solomon's double one. The tribesman is sensual but cleanly so. Perversion is practically unknown, and matters of sex are as normal and natural as doubtless they were intended to be.

All primitive races have practised magic and I have referred to the prevalence of the practice of various forms of sympathetic magic among the tribesmen of Liberia; but it would be interesting scientifically to determine the analogy between present-day tribal magic and the ancient magic of Egypt and of the Jews. Egyptian religion and Egyptian medicine were very largely based on sympathetic magic, and the Bible records some of the doings of those old magicians when Moses and Aaron appeared before Pharaoh, in the following words:

"And Moses and Aaron went unto Pharaoh, and they did so as Jehovah had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called for the wise men and the sorcerers: and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: But Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods . . . and he lifted up the rod, and smote the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh, and in the sight of his servants: and all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood . . . and the magicians of Egypt did in like manner with their enchantments: . . . and Aaron stretched out his hand over

the waters of Egypt and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. And the magicians did in like manner with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt. . . . Behold tomorrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as had not been in Egypt since the day it was founded even until now. . . . Then Moses stretched forth his rod toward Heaven and Jehovah sent thunder and hail and fine rain down unto the earth. . . . Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail."

Thus we see that not only was magic practised and highly respected in Egypt, but that the negro tribes and races were already in contact with Egypt during the period when magic science was at its height there. It is not too fanciful to suppose that among the nobles and guards of Pharaoh who witnessed that surprising contest between Moses and the magicians of Egypt there were negroes from the Soudan.

Other races from this foundation of magic were to develop all of the sciences of today, and though it may seem a far cry from the witch doctor crouching over his little fire muttering incantations, surrounded by an awed circle of fear-stricken faces in the African bush, to the modern laboratory with its

ray machines and high powered microscopes and the doctor of science surrounded by a circle of modern students, yet the progression is a logical one and its sequence is historically clear. Only conservatism and the climatic conditions of the land of the negroes has prevented this development from taking place as rapidly there.

The average tourist in Egypt never goes as far south as Ethiopia's old capital Meroe, but an American expedition (Harvard African Society) scientifically examined the pyramids built there by the Ethiopian kings and found evidences that, just as at Ur, it had been the custom on the death of the king to gather and kill at the time of his interment, friends, wives, guards and servants that they might accompany and serve their ruler in the everlasting life to which he had gone. On the West Coast of Africa, not so many years ago, when the King of Dahomey died, servants and wives were sacrificed; and he was buried in a huge pit with his coffin upheld on the shoulders of slaves, who were buried alive in that position. Was this ceremony of kingly burial and future service a tradition, that like the ghosts of melody and shadows of ritual, crossed the void of centuries to reach finality on the West Coast?

CHAPTER VIII

WHAT EVERY COASTER KNOWS

THE tribeswomen in West Africa are almost never employed as servants by the foreign residents or educated Coast people. Detribalized girls who have had mission training are frequently employed; but the tribeswoman, more conservative than the man, keeps to her country ways.

When the women are not busy with their household tasks they spend a great deal of time in personal adornment, particularly in dressing their hair, and West African coiffures seem to be limited in style only by the imagination that evolves them. Sometimes these take the form of a hundred or more tiny plaits, or in a multitude of partings radiating from a common centre—a sort of sunburst effect. In passing native houses, one of the commonest sights to be seen is a group of women cleaning and dressing each other's hair. They use a wooden comb something like a fork.

After the dressing comes the powder; only in

Africa, powder is either white clay or pounded rice. In the interior the women frequently cover the entire body with a smear of this white powder or clay with startling effect. Another even more bizarre variation is achieved by covering the face and neck with a multitude of evenly spaced white lines, about the width of a match.

Palm oil, coconut oil and the juice of certain berries are ordinarily used in the toilet. Soap, foreign scents and toilet powders are highly valued, but as these are expensive and frequently unobtainable, the native uses the berries of the soap tree and gets a good brown lather from them.

For a toothbrush a short stick is used, one end of which has been chewed until it is softened and the fibre wadded into a sort of brush. The natives ordinarily walk along chewing these sticks and working at their teeth as they go. Although they appear to have fine teeth, most natives have a great deal of toothache and suffer much from tooth decay, as is to be expected with people living on soft cooked food as they do on the West Coast.

The tribeswomen of Liberia are well protected by tribal law, and have their own societies, and a ceremonial ritual quite apart from the men. In many ways, they are surprisingly free to do as they please, especially when some cult service of Women's

Bush matter is involved. By far the most puzzling of these private affairs of the ladies is the institution of Fine Boy among the Krus. Every once in a while the women of the Krus will hold an election to select a young good-looking man to be their "Fine Boy". There is a march with music and singing, and the newly elected Fine Boy is placed in the front of the procession. He is installed in a fine hut with much ceremony, and the women engage in considerable rivalry to give him presents of silks, clothes, fine food, tobacco and drink. They visit him when they like, and no Kru man would think of objecting to the attention his wife bestows on the Fine Boy. Then one day the Fine Boy is dead. They never seem to live long. I have often thought of the ceremonies of the Dying God associated with Adonis worship, and wondered how the Fine Boy cult arose in West Africa.

Among the pagan tribes there seems to be a very vague idea of life after death. Their conception of an after life is more the belief that a spirit may hang about and either exercise a benevolent or malevolent effect. They commonly refer to the spirits of their ancestors as aiding them or watching over them, and they are exceedingly careful not to offend the spirits, because they fear that a friendly one may become antagonistic, or that the ghost of

an enemy may haunt them after the enemy's death. I never succeeded in getting any clear statement of their belief as to the life of the spirit itself excepting in its relation to the living, as just stated. I have several times received statements from natives that indicated a belief in one great God, but always as something far off and not personally concerned with the living nor with the actions of the good or bad spirits.

In many of these tribes the usual form of sepulture is to bury the dead in the doorway or under the eaves of the hut. This appears to be done partly as a means of protection for the bones of an ancestor and partly to secure the benevolent aid of his spirit. There is no question but that the native believes that for a long time after death the spirit hangs about the body or bones of the deceased.

In the recent boundary dispute between France and Liberia it was determined that while most of the towns of the Boozie tribe were in undisputed Liberian territory, Zigida, their principal town, where all the paramount chiefs and great men of the tribe are buried, was just over the French line. If Liberia had conceded Zigida to the French it might well have involved the future allegiance of the tribe, as the tribal leaders, in their desire to retain the protection of their ancestors' spirits, would have re-

fused to abandon their town and so would have become French subjects. Naturally the tribesmen would have followed their leaders, and it is quite possible that the entire tribe—numbering nearly sixty thousand—would have moved into French territory. This embarrassing situation was finally settled by an agreement that permitted Zigida to remain Liberian, and France to receive an equal amount of territory elsewhere.

The West Coast of Africa has the unpleasant reputation of being a centre of yellow fever, bubonic plague, black water fever, malaria and dysentery, and while a lot of money is being expended annually in the fight against these diseases and very great advancement in medical skill and treatment has been made in the last few years, it is regrettably true that from a practical point of view, little progress has been made. Many foreigners die every year and others are invalided home, while among the natives, the mortality rate, particularly among children, is abnormally high.

Lagos in Nigeria has a congested native quarter of over two hundred thousand people; while within the radius of a day's journey are several other native cities each containing over a hundred thousand inhabitants. A native city in Africa is constructed of wattle, mud and straw, the roofs of the huts being

of heavy thatch. These houses are so closely huddled together that there is hardly room for two people to pass, the roofs frequently touching and often overlapping. There is no such thing as a sewer system. Water for household use is kept in tins, barrels, or gourds. Under such conditions, disease germs, mosquitoes, and rats find life ideal. The authorities, however, have found it most difficult to do anything to better these conditions because of the obstinacy and ignorance of the natives.

Accra on the Gold Coast is another centre of infection, although here a smaller native population and more room for expansion have permitted a better segregation of the natives from foreign residents. American readers will recall the death of Professor Noguchi at Accra last year where he was engaged in the study of yellow fever. The Rockefeller Institute, in a special effort to combat the disease, has maintained on the West Coast for a number of years an American and foreign staff with headquarters at Lagos. Professor Noguchi, who was the most eminent authority on yellow fever, contracted the disease and died from it, as have many British and American scientists while working there.

Dakar keeps its native population very largely segregated, and they have better sanitary control

than the other Coast cities; but last year the yellow fever got the best of the authorities to such an extent that for several months military measures had to be taken to draw special sanitary cordons for the protection of the population. For a while business was practically abandoned. All foreigners and officials who could possibly be spared were sent away. The statistics of that epidemic were masked under the appellation of "maladie nombre dix".

Last year some ghastly tales drifted down the coast to us of ships out from Dakar that had been found derelict at sea, their entire crew ill or dying from yellow fever.

There have been a number of cases of yellow fever in Liberia during the last three years, but the disease is not endemic there. With anything like competent medical control it can be kept in check or entirely prevented; but the fact that Liberia furnishes labour to the ships on the Coast has made it almost impossible to prevent the returning labourers from bringing the disease into the country.

It is doubly difficult for the medical authorities or other officials to stamp out yellow fever effectively because the West Coast native has built up considerable resistance to this disease, which by them is called jaundice. He seldom dies from it except in childhood, and after lying about ill for five or six

weeks recovers and goes about his affairs. He therefore regards yellow fever as being particularly a white man's disease, and, consequently, one in which he has no interest. To go to all the trouble foreign doctors and authorities insist on, is to his mind merely allowing himself to be unduly oppressed or put upon. I remember a high negro official who applied to me for permission to pass through a quarantined section, saying, "You know, yellow fever has nothing to do with the black man". Lately, a very interesting speculation based on what may develop to have been accurate information has changed the situation, and the negro population may awaken to the fact that yellow fever is just as much a disease of the black man as of the white. This theory is that the yellow fever germs originally coming from a native to a white man acquire such increased virulence in the white man that, if in turn it is carried from him to a native, it will then cause the death of the native. I know that several natives contracted and died of yellow fever shortly after several white people, who had employed them, died. At any rate the education of the natives is as much a part of the eradication of yellow fever as the development of a vaccine or serum.

Both vaccines and sera are at present in an early experimental stage. Most of us took the vac-

cine as offering the only possible preventive known; yet one white man died of yellow fever two months after having completed his vaccine injections. It is not pleasant to live or work in a community where such a disease is prevalent, and where, every now and then, one of your associates falls a victim to it. My ice box was stored with both vaccine and serum, which was received monthly from the Rockefeller Institute in New York. Every time I opened the refrigerator door, it was a constant reminder, quite as much as the doctor's calling, to get a fresh supply for new cases.

I have never known a case of bubonic plague in Liberia, but at other places on the Coast it has frequently been reported. I had the "pleasure" of travelling on an English boat two years ago on which one of the passengers died. Later the captain received a wireless from the port authorities, who had taken charge of the body of the deceased, that examination disclosed the man's death had been caused by plague, which diagnosis was "expected to be confirmed by further deaths on board". That was a pleasant trip. We passengers eyed each other expectantly and when someone felt a touch of malaria or a little too much of the night before, we all held our breath until the doctor could be interviewed. I do not believe that any ship's doctor was ever more

popular and sought after than the gentleman who occupied that position on that trip.

Our ship was cursed from port to port. At Dakar the French authorities insisted on running a potty looking lighter alongside that fumigated our ship with sulphur, while the choking and cursing passengers were compelled to collect on the deck. At Teneriffe we were greeted with rifles and shotguns and forbidden to hold any communication with shore under penalty of being fired at; but by this time, being outcasts had become amusing, and to the disgust of the Spanish sanitary authorities and in the face of their hostile patrol boats, we held a dance and inaugurated ways and means of pretending to communicate with the small boats that came out to look us over, all of which aroused the gas-masked and be-rifled guards to excited action and fluent curses.

The period of quarantine for plague is from ten to fifteen days, so that when our ship reached England without the diagnosis being confirmed, we had nothing more to worry about.

But a trip on a homeward bound West Coast ship always offers delightful little variations of this sort. Once when I was sitting reading, my mind far away from West Africa, I was suddenly grasped in fond embrace by a big baboon which had escaped from

its quarters and was wandering about looking for company. He proved perfectly harmless; but he nearly scared me out of a year's growth. Another time we were warned that a black memba, a cousin of the cobra and one of the most deadly snakes in Africa, had gotten loose and was wandering about the ship. On another trip one of the native crew died of smallpox and was buried at sea in the middle of the night. There are frequently deaths on the West African boats, from one cause or another; but I have never known anyone to die of delirium tremens. I daresay that is the one immunity a Coaster acquires.

Black water fever is the curse of many parts of the tropics, and little or nothing is known about it. It generally appears after an old resident has experienced repeated attacks of malaria. Its effect is a rapid disintegration of the blood, which throws a burden upon the kidneys that they may, or may not, succeed in carrying. If they cease to function the patient dies. There is a chance for recovery if the patient will keep perfectly quiet and drink nothing but gallons of soda water. So far this is the only treatment found effective for black water fever; quinine only serves to speed up the disease, and it is for this reason that in Africa quinine is never given on a rising fever; but aspirin is used instead. The

quinine is given to eliminate the malaria, only when the fever has started to decrease.

Malaria is with us always on the West Coast and one's morning breakfast is not complete unless your steward hands you along with your coffee or tea, "dem quinine, sah." Some people prefer it in the evening instead of the morning, but whether morning or evening, five grains per day of quinine hydrochloride—not sulphate—is the standard dose.

Beri-beri, fever, dysentery, skin disease or ulcers were the principal complaints of our "Red Shirts". We had to be constantly on guard against dysentery, because while natives acquire immunity to infection from local streams in the vicinity of their homes up country, this immunity appears to be lost immediately they are removed to a different section; then, unless water is carefully watched, an outbreak of dysentery may put half of a working force out of commission. Beri-beri is entirely a question of food, and as it is frequently impossible to get native rice on the Coast, a diet of polished rice is very likely to start beri-beri in your camp. For some unfortunate reason, it always picks out your best men.

Since medical attention is hard to get, doctors being few and far between, every foreigner has to be a sort of doctor, and one's medicine kit is the most valuable piece of equipment. House boys, per-

sonal servants, workmen or up-country chiefs and tribesmen confidently expect every foreign traveller or resident to cure them of all of their diseases. In a way, this is a good thing for the foreigner because it gives him an opportunity to do something for these people that will in turn benefit him. Quinine, salts, castor oil, iodine and permanganate of potash are the real standbys; but in dosing a native, one should remember that his system is accustomed to pepper and raw drugs taken in quantities and of a strength that would certainly kill anyone else; consequently, doses must be correspondingly increased to be effective.

Very few natives ever reach real old age. In native villages and even on the Coast I have been constantly surprised by the small number of old people. Doctors, long resident on the Coast, say that the average native has a dilated heart because he ordinarily works hard and lives hard on an unbalanced and insufficient diet; that it is these causes rather than climate which shorten the native's life.

The question of diet is a serious one for the foreign resident and many men get so ill they are forced to leave the Coast simply because they are too busy or too tired to supervise their kitchen. Most foreigners live out of tins, because they say they cannot get fresh "chop." I never found this to be true

or necessary. If a man will only use a bit of ingenuity and take the time to train servants—particularly the cook—he can have an excellent variety of food. Naturally a boy will never bother to invent or study the preparation of dishes unless the master is interested. It is easy to "kill a tin" and hard to find green vegetables; yet if one hopes to keep fit, a little attention to the kitchen will go very far toward successfully combating the evil climate and the general strain characteristic of the West Coast.

Breadfruit boiled and creamed makes an excellent substitute for new potatoes, and one which few people can identify from them. Fresh avacado pears served as salad or diced and used as dumplings in soup are much more delicate than the ones commonly known as alligator pears in the markets of the United States. Green cocoanut jelly uncooked and mixed with sugar is more delicious than the average jellies we know, and the heart of palm when raw makes an excellent substitute for celery in salad, or for cabbage when boiled and served hot. There are always fruits to be had, and if one is near the sea, many varieties of very fine fish, wild guinea, wild pigeons and many different kinds of ducks that are far preferable to the scrawny, undersized chickens which seem to be prevalent throughout the tropics.

Turtle eggs are commonly sold in the markets as

the Hawkbill turtle is plentiful on the coast. When travelling along the shore in a surfboat native boatmen will often spy a turtle on the beach egg laying and stop their craft to secure the eggs. Turtle steak or stew with egg sauce is very good eating indeed.

The West Coast of Africa has two very famous dishes and several others, not so celebrated perhaps, but which are peculiar to that part of the world. The dish especially beloved by foreigners is groundnut chop. This is usually eaten on Sunday and it is made and served as follows: The cook takes a quantity of peanuts, or what West Africans call ground nuts, and grinds these in a wooden mortar to a paste, which he afterward proceeds to boil, thinning it with water and edible palm oil. In a separate pot he parboils chicken and pork. When they are available, they add shrimp, oysters, and langouste. This is all highly seasoned with pepper, salt, a bit of ginger, some small green eggplants, and then mixed with the pounded peanut stock and cooked until the meat is tender. Meanwhile the cook has been preparing boiled rice, hard boiled eggs, grated fresh cocoanut and the terrible peppers of the West Coast, these last being hotter than any variety of peppers known outside of Central America.

The proper method of serving this dish is first to

arrange the rice on a plate to form a base. Over this is poured the chicken-peanut-pork combination; then over all is spread a few spoonfuls of the grated cocoanut. This is dusted with a little of the hard boiled egg to give it a garnish, and finally the chopped green fresh pepper is lightly sprinkled over it, as a last touch. Usually, plenty of beer is served with ground-nut chop, and it is reserved for Sundays obviously because the only reasonable result of such a repast is a long siesta.

The other dish only second in fame is palm-oil chop. This is very much like chicken fricassee as it is known in America; but instead of a cream gravy of flour and butter, palm oil is used in place of both butter and cream. This dish is also highly seasoned with green peppers, but because of its high fat content, neat whiskey or gin is always served with it as the appropriate beverage. One must acquire a taste for palm oil in order to like this dish; but Coasters become so fond of it that sealed containers of palm-oil chop are often shipped from the Coast in the refrigerators of steamers to be delivered as a special treat to ex-residents living in England and Germany.

Rice, as I have said, is the staple article of food for the Liberian. With this he also eats two preparations of cassava; one known as fu-fu and the other called dumboy. Both of these dishes are made

from the cassava root, a plant similar to the one from which commercial tapioca is made. Of the two, fu-fu is the more delicate, as the starch is extracted by grating and pounding the root in a large wooden mortar with a heavy pestle—usually a piece of wood six feet long and three inches in diameter—until the resulting white paste is as light and frothy as a raised biscuit. Dumboy is much the same, but the roots used are coarser and older, which require a certain amount of cooking to aid in the extraction of the starch before the pounding takes place. Both dumboy and fu-fu are eaten with a sauce in which palm oil largely figures. Dumboy looks like and has the consistency of unbaked bread dough, and if one were so indiscreet as to attempt to chew it, the performance would be very like the antics of a puppy who has been given a piece of soft molasses candy to chew. The palm oil sauce makes a good lubricant, however, so the customary way of disposing of dumboy is to swallow chunks of the paste without mastication; but well greased with the sauce.

One of the sauces commonly used is called palaver. This is palm oil flavored with meat stock in which a considerable quantity of okra has been cooked. Like all other West African dishes, it is highly seasoned with the fiery green peppers.

The tribesmen eat many insects as well as snakes

and one of the greatest delicacies is the queen ant of a termite hill. This queen is about as big as the little finger and is large, fat and white like a grub. I remember seeing two natives carefully cut one of these in half as a special tid-bit to place on top of their respective rice bowls.

The python constrictor of West Africa grows to enormous size, only equalled or exceeded by the boa of South America. Even when these snakes are only eight or ten feet long they are as thick as a man's thigh and the muscles as strong as steel cables. The meat looks good and tastes like pork. Once up country one of my companions shot a big python. As it writhed about with its head blown off, the porters piled on top of it, each hoping to get a piece of the meat for his supper. In the scramble somebody sat on the python's tail in such a way as to give the muscles a good purchase, and in the resulting convulsions one of the boys had two ribs broken before anyone had time to loosen the grasp on the tail.

The Mohammedan tribes do not eat the food prohibited by their religion, at least in theory. Snakes and insects are not found in their diet as they are with the pagan tribes. Most of the bush people eat dogs, especially the Boozies, who are rated as being nominally Mohammedan. In their country dogs are

raised as food, and I think nowhere else are dogs carried about in baskets and stuffed wth food just as geese are fattened abroad for goose liver. The eating of one of these especially fed and carefully fattened dogs is the greatest treat these people know; comparable only to our diamond back terrapin, canvasback duck, or vintage hams.

Fried grasshoppers are another special delicacy to the bush gourmet. Foreigners who have eaten them say they are exceedingly good, tasting like fried oyster crabs. They are prepared by pulling off the heads, wings, and legs, and then they are fried until crisp in palm oil. Very few natives would eat them raw with as great relish as did old Zu, one of my messengers. In the grasshopper season, when Zu had delivered the post to my office, he would go into the yard and sit on the steps with a rusty old tin can of water beside him. He would collect a handful of grasshoppers from the flowers and plants about him, and eat them raw and alive, washing each mouthful down with a sip from his old tin can.

The Liberian citizen, as distinguished from the tribesman, eats and cooks very much as do the people in the United States, excepting that rice and cassava figure largely in his diet. An American will find, if invited to a well-to-do Liberian's home, that the cooking is exceedingly good. He will even find fresh

shrimp, and lobster—so-called, although it is really langouste; while east of Monrovia, oysters are to be had. I do not believe one can find better cake or biscuits anywhere in the world than in Liberia. The baking of these will remind one of stories of the early days in America, for there being but few kitchen ranges, all baking is done outdoors in large round iron pots, which are sometimes three feet or more in diameter. A wood fire is built under these pots and around them the hot coals banked up, until the pot is heated. Finally, several shovelfuls of hot coals are placed on top of the lid. A long iron bar or stick in the hands of two persons is used to lift the lid so the process of baking can be inspected from time to time. Whether this system has anything to do with the successful result, I do not know; but the finished product could not be excelled anywhere.

In Liberia every servant or labourer is called "boy". When one wants a drink, a pack of cigarettes, a bath, or any other service, it is then customary to yell, "Boy!!!" One Liberian official on a visit to Washington, D. C., employed a servant there. After a few days the servant came to him and said, "Give me my money, I ain't a gonna work for no man that call me boy. I am just as much a man as you is".

Natives will address a man whose name they do not know as "Pa", and a woman is always referred to as "Mammy". We taught our house boys to call the wives of the Americans, "Missy", because Madame was too difficult for them. Any little girl became a "small missy". Above all things the Coast loves a title, and men are usually referred to by their official title if they have one, while a missionary is always a "God palava man".

The foreign resident in West Africa finds himself at once surrounded by a retinue of servants, and according to the African point of view, an important man must have at least a certain specified number, the descending scale marking the gradation of each foreigner's position and the respect to which he is entitled.

Under any circumstances a foreigner must have a personal servant and a cook; but that is the minimum. Top officialdom requires a staff of eleven or twelve composed of a chief steward, one or two assistant stewards, a cook and cook's mate, a washman and a washman's helper, a messenger, and chauffeur. These are frequently augmented by a yard boy, an extra messenger and a night watchman. The average steward gets from two pounds ten a month to a maximum of five pounds, with an additional allowance of about a pound for food. The

cook usually gets a little less. The small stewards, watchmen and messengers receive about a pound a month. All of these wages are referred to as "moon money", although on the Coast they are paid by the calendar month and not by the lunar month as formerly. The allowance for food is either given in actual measured quantities of rice, fish, palm oil, soap, and tobacco, or in the estimated cash equivalent, and is generally distributed weekly. This is the only way that one can be sure the men will have enough to eat, because they are naturally improvident and are bound to aid any clan brother who may turn up and demand assistance. Nine servants out of ten are in debt to somebody and will borrow ahead, if permitted, just as far as their credit can be extended.

The actual workings of this clan-brotherhood is a wonderful and exasperating institution to the foreigner. A servant always has one or more of "my brudder from de country" hanging about. This brother is either visiting the Coast as a matter of pleasure or in search of work, and he expects and receives as a matter of course the utmost in the way of food and assistance that the servant can extend him. Natives will sleep anywhere they can find a place out of the weather to hang a hammock or lay a sleeping mat. Constant inspections of one's lofts,

storehouses, outbuildings and even the ground under the bungalow are necessary if one expects to keep premises reasonably free from one to twenty of these unknown and uninvited guests. No amount of assurance from even trusted servants can be relied upon, because a lie for a clan brother is no lie at all, and no native can comprehend the foreigner's dislike for a crowd of strange people hanging about his premises. This is just one of the crazy notions of the foreigner.

Everyone of these servants considers himself a member of the household and expects the master to protect him, to take an interest in his private affairs and to see that he is kept in good health and doctored on full pay while he is sick. I found that if one wishes to be relieved of most of this bother and responsibility, the best system is to make the head steward responsible not only for the work but for the actual employment and dismissal of all of the servants. As long as the head steward's position was recognized by me and the servants had to go to him with their troubles or disputes, I found that seventy-five per cent of my difficulties in this direction were eliminated. A good head steward can run the household in a way that makes West African life a pleasure; but the minute the master interferes between a servant and the head steward, every bit

of order vanishes and one becomes involved in a network of petty difficulties.

An example of the discipline exacted by a good chief steward came under my observation one day, when I was disturbed by shrieks and yells that came from the compound. Going out, I found one of the small stewards being spanked by another boy, while the chief steward stood by judicially superintending the performance. When I inquired the reason for the punishment, my chief steward informed me, "Massah, dem small boy no take bath for two days; I 'member him good".

The yells were out of all proportion to the moderate chastisement; but this is often true in West Africa. One can never judge by the noise whether a victim is really suffering injury or has only stubbed his toe. The African figures that if he yells loud enough he can satisfy his assailant and reduce the severity of the punishment.

In Liberia the daily vegetable, fruit, fish and meat marketing is done by the cook. It is well that this is so, for bargaining is long and crafty and the money and change is a problem that has to be argued out in accordance with the native mind. In the first place, English bank notes, British palm tree shillings, coppers, and smaller coins circulate as well as Liberian half-dollars; while up country, many natives are to

be found who cannot count above two hands and two feet—that is, twenty.

Paying off labour or buying country products under these conditions involves long discussion and the advice of mutual friends with the silver and copper spread out on the ground, to be studied and considered. Each purchase is to be paid for and argued about separately. When exact change cannot be made, a tomato, a piece of sugar cane, some fruit or anything of approximately the correct value is accepted as change.

CHAPTER IX

THE TALKING DRUMS

DANCING is the very life of the African tribesman. In it he finds the necessary expression of joy, life and religion. It is in the wild rhythm of native music one best feels that ever present sense of life that surrounds one in Africa. The native may carry a fifty-pound load all day long and fling himself exhausted on the ground at the end of the day, but let someone start with the dancing drums, fatigue is forgot, and he will dance for half the night. There are fertility dances at the planting of the crops and at the harvest time. There are dances when the maidens come out of the bush, and dances when the boys have reached manhood. There are sword dances and spear dances and dances that illustrate the hunt. Of these, the most remarkable is the dance of the spears in which the performer throws a spear up in the air, and without looking up, catches it in his hand as it falls. The slightest miscalculation and that falling spear might stand quivering in the body of the dancer.

In one of the sword dances there is an odd figure in which a well trained child performer is thrown back and forth between two of the dancers as they circle with whirling swords; always the child is caught by one hand just over or under the flashing blades.

In their solo dancing the natives frequently imitate wild life as in the dance and song of the "Little Bird at the Spring".

Near Monrovia, when there is going to be a big dance in a native town, the drummers start marching about in their high headdresses and uniforms of goat skins; from the byways of the native quarter the people come running and fall in behind the drummers in a little crowd, all singing a chant, until finally a great multitude, chanting and shuffling, in time to the drums, goes off down the road to the village; then all night long, until nearly daylight, will come the pound and throb of the drums and the rising and falling cadence of the chants. Work and troubles are forgotten, as Africa rests and finds renewed vitality in rhythm.

On moonlit nights during the dry season, I could hear from my veranda, that overlooked the land of the five rivers, the chant of the canoemen while they were still far off. All the marsh of deepest blue was picked out by the silvered waters, and low

and clear—first from one place and then another—came the song. Sometimes an echo caught and held the refrain, or other boatmen answered the simple words. If they passed close enough, I could see their dark outline, and hear the splash of the paddles as they kept time to the chant.

Before the motor truck came, transport was by porter; hundreds of carriers marching single file with a small chief or headman in charge. If the caravan was large, there would be a drummer or two to play and sing, and the long line of men, each with a fifty-pound kinje on his back, would chant the responses. Once I heard the song of the rice, as eight hundred porters brought in the new crop. From far off, the rise and fall of their voices sounded like the playing of a battle march on a great cathedral organ. There was a vast dignity to those people and to their toil; even without knowing the words the music told of it.

Native children have toys made of wood or straw, bows and arrows and sometimes, if near the coast, a ball. Kick ball is popular with all Coast children and their dexterity in catching it on knee or foot, so as to bounce it back to the other players without touching it with their hands, is splendid.

Native men play a game called soko by the Boozies and warrei by some of the others. This game is

played by two people on a board having twelve holes or pockets arranged in a double line of six; on the two ends of the row are two more pockets to hold the captured men. The twelve pockets are called villages and the object is to "eat up" the opponent's villages. The game is played very rapidly. To play it well, one must be able to remember the number of men in each village, the number being changed in each one with every rapid move. Natives will gamble all their possessions, even their own relatives will be pawned out to provide funds for a big game. Some of the warrei boards are very old and beautifully carved. They are, if not the most prized possession of the owner, at least something very near to it.

In the other arts the native has gone very far. There are bronze figures and weapons which show keen observation and artistry, but the older pieces of these bronzes are far superior to the present-day examples. I have several of these older ones, one of which is a bell, and this is the only piece of bas-relief I have ever seen in West Africa. It represents a row of dancing men that completely encircles the middle of the bell. On the head of each figure is a high pointed cap; while the arms and legs are bent queerly at the elbows and knees. For all the primitiveness of the work, it is singularly full of motion.

Carved wooden figures made for religious and magical purposes. (Front.)

Carved wooden figures made for religious and magical purposes. (Rear.)

Cast bronze human and animal figures covered with crosses, circles and amulets of power, the symbolism of the bush.

The treatment of the arms and legs which I have mentioned is curiously like one of the friezes at Angkor Vat that depicts a dance in the war with the monkey god.

I have another very good bronze which shows a man seated on a log working two monkey-skin bellows before his iron-smelting hearth. The modelling is crude but exceedingly strong and there is not one single unnecessary detail, yet the correct balance and muscular effort used in working the bellows is perfectly achieved.

Again, in another bronze which is that of a woman pounding dumboy, the modelling is very fine, and in two figures of fongo boys, every detail of the ornamentation of their coats, headdresses and monkey-skin drums has been carefully suggested.

The modern way of modelling and casting bronze still follows the ancient system. The artist-craftsman first makes a figure in wax that he afterward covers with a mixture of clay and sand that is dried and burned until it is hard enough to serve as a mould; the wax, being melted by the heat, runs out of a little hole made for that purpose. When the mould is hard, the molten metal is poured in, the rough edges being smoothed off afterward with a stone. Horses, dogs, turtles, lizards and birds are frequently made, but they rarely achieve great suc-

cess with these animal bronzes. Only in one instance, that of a bronze lizard, do I recall seeing anything that indicated any religious symbolism. The lizard in question is a bronze in my possession which is completely covered with the symbolism of the bush, crosses, circles and amulets of power.

In their wood carvings there is a great difference from the metal work because the carved wooden figures and masks appear always to be made for a religious or magical purpose, and the human figure is subordinated to the conventionalized form decreed by some fertility or other cult.

The carving of stone has practically ceased. The few stone figures that have been found are evidently very old; but it has never been determined whether they were made by the ancestors of the present tribesmen or whether they antedate their coming to West Africa. Since the present tribesmen do not know how to work in stone, and have no knowledge concerning these figures, it is very possible that in some instances they were brought from other parts of Africa.

The Coast natives give considerable artistic expression to the form of their canoe paddles. Curiously enough, the blades are often carved in the shape of a trident, or sometimes the handle of the paddle will be carved in the form of a crocodile.

Again one wonders about the origin of the possible symbolism. In the interior the love of carving frequently expresses itself in crude figures something like the totem poles of the American Indians. These are usually used as pillars to support the central palaver house of a native village.

Carved ivory is seldom found as far west as Liberia; farther down the coast, near the mouth of the Congo, ivory carving is common; but I have never seen anything but crude shapes of dogs and alligators or badly executed copies of East Indian work. There are so many things manufactured in the more civilized parts of the West Coast for purpose of export that unless one knows his territory, this poorer stuff may be thought to be representative of native art which it most decidedly is not.

The natives of Liberia make beautiful sheath knives with iron or brass blades and handles of carved wood, leather or ivory which they frequently colour. In nearly all cases the sheaths are made of coloured leather or hammered aluminum.

A very considerable trade is carried on in aluminum which is brought from Europe in bars and sold to the natives who skilfully work it up into bracelets, chains, rings, knife sheaths and other articles for use or adornment.

A native chief often wears a ceremonial sword

gorgeously sheathed in coloured leather with huge leather tassels hanging from it, and generally he also carries a plaited leather whip with a handle of decorated and coloured leather. The ceremonial spears are also usually sheathed in leather and the shafts covered with leather and leopard hide. More businesslike spears are frequently made of solid metal, both shaft and blade. The weight of these is considerable; but they are so beautifully balanced that they are an exceedingly effective weapon.

Years ago the tomahawk was much used; but today, the natives prefer the heavy knife or sword. I secured one tomahawk, a real treasure, that has a heavy bronze blade about three inches wide at the cutting edge and curving back ten inches or so from that to the handle. This blade is completely covered with small incised designs that appear to be decorative rather than symbolic. The wooden handle is covered with bands of bronze, and there is a bronze chain to suspend it from a belt.

Before the advent of the gun the bow and arrow was used in West Africa for birds and small game; but they are very seldom seen any more. The arrows used are straight reeds or sticks with sharpened ends. I have never seen a stone or metal-headed arrow, nor have I seen a feathered arrow. If these were ever used, apparently the art of mak-

ing them has been forgotten. Personally, I do not believe that any of the tribes south of the Soudan ever learned to feather an arrow. For close-up jungle shooting there was no need.

The rhythm and roll of drums impresses the newcomer more than any other African sound. All day and all night from one week's end to another, comes the boom, boom, boom and rumble of drums. At night on the Coast, when the homely sounds of daily tasks and town life quiet down, there comes from over the jungle the low boom of the distant drums; often the beat of a tom-tom from some nearby village cuts in with its rhythmic pulsations.

In your camp up country you become accustomed to the sound of the drums, just as you get used to the roar of a big city, and it is only when you throw yourself down for a few moments of rest or stop to light your pipe, that you become conscious of the throb of a forest drum. You stop and listen—far off an answering drum responds. The air is always vibrating with this undertone of the bush that is the pulse beat of Africa.

Dancing drums, singing drums, talking drums, devil drums; of all the arts, the drums take precedence. There are great drums of hollowed hard wood eight feet high, that give off the metallic boom of an old eastern temple gong, and little drums, of

monkey skin stretched on a light framework, to be held under the arm while dancing.

News trickles down country: "So and so killed an elephant". Your steward will say, "I hear country word . . . Mr. D. sit down at Zorzor". Drum talk. I asked many questions about those drum messages. My boys assured me the drums talk, not in an alphabet of dots and dashes, but in rhythmic words understood only by those who have been taught the language of the drums. Some simple words nearly every one of them know, but long messages only the skilled can interpret.

There are many stories told of bush telegraph, as it is called. It is true that in South Central Africa the natives knew about Queen Victoria's death two days before messages were received there by the white residents, and in Liberia the natives knew of the beginning of the World War some days before the runners of the Coast had reached the interior stations.

Whatever the system may be, the natives guard it carefully and few foreigners have ever succeeded in making any use of it. I used to visit a friend of mine who lived thirty miles away at a time when the customary method of travel meant a four hour journey by motor launch, or a ten hour journey by canoe, because there was no automobile road. I

always found the table spread and all preparations made for my reception. As I did not usually decide on going until a half hour or so before I left, and as there was no possible way for anyone to have arrived there ahead of me, I was astonished at first and asked questions, but all my friend knew was that his steward had said I was coming, and all the steward would say was that he had heard it. In this same way when the engineers were working in the interior my native boys usually knew where they were, when they were coming down, or whether there was any trouble in camp. Frequently we would compare notes to see if the boys' information was accurate, and invariably it was.

After I left West Africa I received word from one of the engineers that the natives two hundred miles back from the Coast had told him on the day I sailed that I had left the country, although the runner bearing letters to that effect did not arrive until eight days later.

Drum talk is one of the Devil Bush arts that should not be allowed to be lost in the new system of things that has come to the Coast.

The potter's art has been long neglected on the Coast. Liberia's pots are generally black or of a red-black ware, and while I have seen one or two that appear to have been made on a potter's wheel, the

majority of the potmakers still use the long rope of clay which is wound in a coil to the shape desired, then patted smooth. The ornamentation is never coloured, but a decorative touch is sometimes given by making cuts of the type known as "thumb-nail design". Brass bowls, tin cans and iron pots have been imported for so long, however, that pottery making has not developed. It is in their original designs as applied to their own hand-spun and woven cotton fabrics, beadwork and basketry that the Liberian native has achieved real skill and beauty.

They have one type of decoration which, as a finished product, somewhat resembles East Indian batik, but the method of applying the colour is different. Several dozen stones of various sizes are tied in a piece of imported white shirting, two or three yards long. Each stone is tied separately and covered with a single thickness of the cloth. This shirting is then dipped in native vegetable indigo dye. When dried, and the strings untied, the pattern of the dye will show white streaks and crush marks in a more or less irregular circle about a blue centre, where the one thickness of cloth covered each stone; the white marks, of course, being that part of the cloth the dye could not reach because of the binding strings. This Lagos cloth, as it is called,

Weaving country cloth.

Kru hut—the walls are built of bamboo and rattan fibre mats.

The native displays great ingenuity in his canoes.

The Krus usually build great square houses.

is greatly valued by the natives and they pay each other exceedingly high prices for it.

The "country cloths" made by the natives are very beautiful and durable. To a great extent each general section of the country has its own designs and method of weaving. The cloths are made of cotton until one gets far into the north, along the boundary of Haut-Senegal. There one finds them made of wool or goat hair instead of cotton. On the coast the roots of the wild indigo plant are used for blue dye, and the cloths are woven in narrow strips and then sewed together to any desired width; but as one approaches the Soudan, the width of the strip increases. Generally, the design of the cloth is in woven stripes or squares. Frequently, to vary the monotony, the cloths are embroidered with blocks, triangles, and diamond-shaped designs, or perhaps comb figures in contrasting colours. I never saw a circle or a spiral used in their fabric designs.

Lately natives have found that European thread is cheaper than their own more durable cotton, and unless one knows the difference, one is likely to buy at a coast port, for an exorbitant price, a country cloth woven from Manchester thread.

West African beadwork is very beautiful and is as fine as the expensive European variety. It is mostly done by the women. It is always woven on a

net, both sides being alike, and the net itself completely covered with the beads. The native designs are very pretty and their selection of colours usually good; sometimes, however, in their anxiety to please foreign customers, the girls will attempt to copy on their hand bags what they consider to be foreign designs. One group who were making very pretty bags, that were in demand among the foreign residents, went to the wharf and copied the marks from boxes and bales of imported goods; several of the bags brought to me had "Glass", "This Side Up", "Fragile", and the initials of foreign firms and shipping companies carefully worked on them.

The Kru people are noted for their skill in weaving mats, which they make in every variety, from thin little ones that would do for table doilies, to the heavy bamboo and rattan fibre mats with which they build the walls of their houses.

All of the tribes are skilled mat makers, however, and mats and baskets woven in beautiful designs and colours are made for every conceivable purpose.

The Liberian hammock is another native art. These hammocks are usually made of coloured fibre and are part of the household equipment of every hut. They also make them out of country cloth and these are the most beautiful; but the fibre hammock is by far the most useful for travelling up country

or when one is being carried by porters, because if it rains, the fibre hammock does not hold the water, whereas the cloth hammock soon makes one feel as if he were riding in a bath tub.

The native displays great ingenuity in his canoes, which are usually made from the soft cottonwood; they are surprisingly light in weight and sometimes large enough to carry five tons of cargo. Frequently, the sides are cut down to a quarter of an inch in thickness and are kept from bending out of shape by small sticks placed thwartwise. As the canoes easily dry out, warp or crack, they are kept partly filled with water; this means that in the smaller ones, which are only about two feet wide and rounded at the bottom, that the passenger must sit on the wet floor in order to keep his balance. To the native who always squats on his heels and knees or just on his heels, it means no annoyance whatever, but to the European, who must use these canoes for crossing streams, this business of sitting down in a pool of dirty water always appears a just cause for fluently cursing Africa and all its ways. A native never makes a new canoe until the old one has completely fallen to pieces. The wrecks I saw in constant use always renewed my faith in miracles—how they keep afloat, with half a side out or with the front completely gone, I do not know.

There is a canoe built and used along the entire West Coast that takes its name from Accra. These canoes are much wider and more substantially constructed than the river canoes which I have just described; but like the lighter ones, they are chopped from a single log of soft wood; because of their shape and balance, it is practically impossible to overturn them. They are excellent in a heavy surf, and at the smaller ports along the Coast are used by the foreigners as well as natives for going off from the beach to ships at sea. These Accra dugouts are kept tarred but around the gunwale are stencilled all kinds of symbolic designs and Bible texts, for good luck. In the Accra canoes it is the custom for travellers to place a comfortable steamer chair and an umbrella. With this luxurious equipment one can travel in considerable comfort.

The African Coast native has evolved a form of sail which serves admirably for his small seagoing canoes; the speed they can make in a comparatively rough sea is astonishing. These sails are held up on three or four sticks without any true mast, and are shaped like a half-opened fan, with the handle or narrow end in the boat, the broad end at the top. If the breeze is too strong, they simply tip this arrangement forward and spill the wind over the top. For any wind coming from the quarter, they can tip this

sail sidewise. I have often seen these canoes, with the crew leaning far out to balance the boat against the wind, simply tearing along in clouds of spray through a sea that would cause a ship of eight thousand tons to roll heavily.

All the Coast natives are expert swimmers and divers, so if their canoes upset, it is not a serious matter, other than the possible loss of fishing gear. The soft wood of which the boats are built prevents them from sinking; the crews soon right them and set up their sails again. The lack of any fixed mast is a considerable advantage in the case of a spill with the necessity of righting the canoe at sea. The Accra type of boat will right itself because of the weight of the keel and the shape of the hull. Originally the natives used finely woven mats for sails, but these have been completely superseded by canvas or sail cloth.

For fishing the natives use a number of ingenious devices: purse nets, drag nets, traps and lines. In the shallow lagoons and rivers one is constantly moved to admiration by the skill with which a native can balance himself in the bow of a tiny canoe and throw for a considerable distance a circular purse net, which is ten or twelve feet in diameter, so that it will fall evenly on the surface.

To be out on the rivers on a dark night and see

the natives spearing fish by torchlight is a picturesque sight. The canoe drifts silently along with only a dip of the paddle now and then to steer it, and the only light is the flare of the torch that reveals the naked bronze body standing erect and tense with the spear poised for the thrust.

The most common form of trap is a wicker or rattan fence. When the fish run up at high tide to feed, the natives fasten a long strip of matting to some sticks, which as the tide falls, permits the water to run off between the narrow slits, but leaves the fish floundering in the mud. When the tide is quite low, the women wade about and pick them up.

The women do most of their fishing with large shallow baskets that are used as scoop nets. Groups of girls and women with these baskets can always be seen wading waist-deep in the small streams and from their chatter and laughter they apparently enjoy it.

Native houses vary according to tribal customs. The Krus usually build great square houses with an "A" roof. This has a framework of poles strongly lashed together with vines. The walls are covered with heavily woven mats of rattan, palm or other durable fibre, and every effort is made to weave the light and dark coloured strips into a pleasing design. The roof is generally thatched with folded palm

leaves placed like shingles. This type of roof provides a cool dry interior, because when it is sunny, the palm thatch will quickly dry and curl up, permitting the air to pass freely; but it expands and so closely flattens in the wet that it completely keeps out the rain.

Natives farther inland sometimes build square huts, but more usually round or oval ones with a high pitched roof. The walls of these are made of palm fronds roughly woven together with vines to hold them in an upright position. This interlacing makes a very comfortable hut in the daytime; but it is cold at night. In these huts the thatch is piled on in a mass, and protection from rain depends on the thickness. None of the other tribes have adopted the Krus' accurate and methodical way of placing the palm thatch. For more permanent construction in the villages, the walls of the huts are usually built of wattle, with the mud plastered on until it is one or two feet thick. These better houses have a heavy thatch of fibre laid on after the manner of the straw thatch used in many parts of Europe. Big houses built in this way are very comfortable, and have been used as residences by many of the foreign district commissioners in British and French colonies, in preference to the European type of wooden bunga-

low, which is never as cool and is in constant need of paint and repair.

Somebody once said that Africa was the land where old hats go. Certainly, the varieties of headgear are extraordinary. One finds bowlers, four-gallon Stetsons, the double tirah of South Africa and silk hats of every vintage, from high stove-pipe beavers to the latest blocks from Piccadilly. Most foreigners, of course, wear the solar topee or sun helmet, while civilized and educated natives use bowlers, American straw hats, felts, and on official occasions, silk hats. The low class native can be happy in an old fez or a cap of cloth or leopard skin, and if he cannot procure one of these, he weaves himself a hat of rushes or leaves. After the war the foreign traders did a rushing business in Army hats, and I remember one native who proudly strutted about all dressed up in a loin cloth and a padded aviator's helmet. Years ago, before Africa looked to London as the centre of fashion, the chiefs eagerly sought high silk hats; but today the sun helmet has become the fashion and symbol of dignity among the chiefs. The high class Mohammedan tribesman, of course, has the good taste to remain faithful to the fez and flowing robes which best become his dignity.

But even more ridiculous than the hats, is the European clothing sported by low class natives, who

These better houses have a heavy thatch of fibre.

The high class Mohammedan tribesman has the good taste to remain faithful to flowing robes.

The beginning of the Red Shirts.

Heavy planks and timbers were cut with a hand saw—backwards.

eagerly seize on any cast-off article of wearing apparel. This fad for European clothes, I could never understand, because the flowing blue and white robes and embroidered gowns that belong to Africa are infinitely more beautiful and appropriate to the climate. Nightgowns, mother-hubbards, and corsets for the heathen are not so much a joke as an atrocity.

About twenty-five years ago the natives wore exceedingly heavy anklets and bracelets of brass or iron. I have one of these old anklets that weighs eight pounds. Even today, the Krus in certain dances use heavy leg ornaments, somewhat like puttees, which are made of small pieces of iron that rattle and tinkle as the wearer walks. A full dress affair among the Krus is a very picturesque and barbaric spectacle, for in that case the girls are naked to the waist and are hung with gold chains and coins. In one dance I saw, their heads were covered with gold nets; they wore glassless gold spectacle frames and carried gold coins between their lips; they were loaded with bracelets and wore the iron leggings of which I speak.

What is true of clothes and hats is true to a lesser extent of footgear. The West African native ordinarily goes barefooted, but he also makes and wears a substantial sandal of leather. The Mandingos make and sell a heavy-soled slipper of gay-coloured

leather, the back of which is turned down under the heel and walked on. I suppose that originally it was impossible to buy these in proper sizes, and as the foot could not be introduced into the shoe in the ordinary way for want of a system of lacing, it became the fashion to bend down the back of the shoe and hang the front over the toes, until now, no one thinks of wearing a Mohammedan slipper in any other way. How a native manages to keep a slipper on as he flop-flops along or climbs over steps and rocks, I never quite figured out.

The Liberian officials and wealthy citizens delight in European clothes of good quality. On formal occasions the frock coat and cutaway of black broadcloth is still *de rigueur;* and the older people, more conservative, wear a frock coat, the skirt of which nearly reaches the ankles and gives a ponderous dignity that I have never seen equalled elsewhere.

It may be interesting to describe the clothing usually worn by foreigners on the West Coast. For men who are out of doors, khaki shorts and a light weight woollen shirt with field boots or leggings is the most serviceable rig. With this is worn a khaki-covered helmet of cork, that has a good wide brim at the back to shield the nape of the neck. The only coat that will turn a tropical rain is an oilskin or a heavy black rubber coat. These are exceedingly hot,

so if one is working, most men prefer to get wet; but protect themselves from chills by wearing wool next to the skin. If one is sitting in a boat or travelling in a hammock the heavy raincoat is useful; but one of a light weight is merely a nuisance. For evening wear or in the offices white drill is the standard material, and in daytime out of doors with this is worn a white pith helmet, which is much lighter than cork, but will not stand rain. Most men usually wear two suits of whites a day, and among those who have adopted the English colonial custom and dress for dinner every night, the short white mess jacket with black silk cummerbund and black or white trousers are worn in the evening.

For travelling in the bush there is nothing to compare with khaki or flannel, and if one is particularly susceptible to the sun, a spine pad should be part of the equipment. Most Americans in Africa prefer riding breeches to shorts, as they protect the knees from scratches. The argument as to the respective merits of heavy shoes or light shoes is one that has raged for many years. Personally, I prefer heavy-soled boots and woollen socks.

The foreigner, if he is wise, will wear mosquito boots in the evenings. These can be bought from any London or continental tropical outfitter and come in white canvas or leather. They are a light weight,

flexible and very comfortable boot, which is worn under the trousers and should reach up to just below the knees, so as to protect the ankles from the bites of yellow fever or malaria carrying mosquitoes. These boots are a great safeguard as most mosquitoes hang about under furniture, and more people are bitten about their ankles than any other part of the body.

CHAPTER X

A NATION IN THE BUILDING

SHIP gossip is often the best way to approach life in the tropics. It is as if a little cross section of the country you are going to visit had been cut off and brought to you for study. Sailing for West Africa from Liverpool, Hamburg, Rotterdam or Bordeaux, the angle of your cross section may vary, but the divisions remain surprisingly clear.

Leaving from England I always have an unhappy feeling. Perhaps tramping about Liverpool's dirty muck and mud in a drizzle, with the raw fog chilling one to the bone, is not conducive to cheerfulness, but I think the feeling goes deeper than physical discomfort. Everyone on the boat is blue; talk is all of the homes they have left behind, and discontent with conditions ahead.

The English do not make their homes in their West African colonies. Out there they are trustees for the natives. The English colonial official is decidedly skeptical of what he feels is a sentimentalism

replacing the former policy of direct administration, but he must acquiesce or resign. On British West African boats the dominant note is the uselessness of it all; that the effort now required to develop the native is out of all proportion to the results accomplished. No matter how much good work is being done, there is little joy in it.

On the boats from Hamburg and Rotterdam one senses the keen competition of trade. The German looks serenely forward to the day when the African colonies will be restored, if not by the return of the present annexed or mandated territories, then by new acquisitions. Ship gossip says there are weak spots in the present division of the continent, which sooner or later, German diplomacy will secure.

From a French port the difference between French and British colonial policies begins to assert itself. No questioning of policy among the French; no division; no fear of not being supported at home. Further, and this is the main point, there is the feeling that the French colonists are part and parcel of France. Even today the African from French territory says in French, *"Je suis Français"*.

In Liberia, the point of view of the governing class, in its relation to the tribesmen, is closely akin to that of the French official.

There are three forms of government in West

Africa and all of them are founded on Western ideas. First, there is the French colonial government that follows the system of Rome and frankly asserts that, by peaceful penetration or by force, France shall be extended over a part of Africa, and the African shall abandon his present culture and accept, in its entirety, the culture of France.

The second system is the plan adopted in the British colonies. This is based on the theory that the British are trustees for future native states, whose organization and culture are to be developed from their present condition to that of a British national unit, such as South Africa or Australia, self-governing, under the plan and culture of the West.

Liberia presents the third form of government. In theory it is a purely Western form of democracy; but in practice, the original plan has been greatly modified to meet the peculiar conditions of the country. In the preceding chapters some description has been given of the customs of the indigenous tribes; but these tribesmen are not included in the Liberia which, as a democracy, is a member of the League of Nations.

The seizure of territory by emigrants from America, the British Empire and other parts of Africa, and the setting up of a government by the

dominant race, occurred just before the West had awakened to the possibilities of tropical territory. A few years later the division of Africa would have been an accomplished fact in which Liberia could have had no place.

During Liberia's hundred years of existence, much of the power and intelligence that might have been devoted to internal development has been concentrated on resistance against the squeezing in of her frontier. Today, the frontier question is in process of final settlement, and Liberia remains a country of, approximately, forty-five thousand square miles. Most of the land is covered with green vegetation, and the annual rainfall varies from seventy-five inches in the interior to one hundred and seventy-five inches on the coast. This land has never been mapped; its mountains and rivers never charted; but its coast line and boundaries have been drawn, and year by year, engineers are working to put a little more of its picture on the inside of the outline.

Liberia has a population of something over a million people ruled by a few families, who maintain a semblance of the form of government brought from America, which was modelled after the governmental system of the United States. It is probable that there never was a plan of government less suited

to the psychology of the tribesmen than the one under which Liberia has laboured, and the adaptation of the people to this system has not been the least of Liberia's problems.

Bitter experience and helplessness in the face of the uncompromising conservatism of the native African, have led to the adoption of two distinct forms of government running concurrently: the oligarchy, operating under the form of a democracy, which is the government that presents itself to the world at large; the other, the tribal oligarchy—purely African and unchanged in form for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years—which is more difficult to learn about and understand, but under which ninety-five per cent of the people live. The beginnings of the Liberian Republic must be touched on to make the picture clear:

The few existing histories of Liberia tell us of freed slaves and free men, drawn largely from America and the British West Indies, assisted by philanthropic societies, going to this land to find the opportunity denied them elsewhere. In those days both the United States and Great Britain maintained fast ships of war off this coast in a final effort to stamp out the slave trade. Now and again mention is made of the unhappy cargo of a captured slaver being dumped on this shore to help make up

the new population. Thus these original colonists were of mixed blood: African negroes, American mulattoes, quadroons and lesser mixtures. History records the purchase of land for the colony at what is now Monrovia and Harper; and again and again reference is made to native wars; a list comprising the names of leaders, of ships and of society agents is given. Then we are told that it became a republic, and the names of its presidents are set out.

On the summit of Cape Mesurado, I found, lying among the rocks, some old brass muzzle-loading cannon, half hidden by vegetation. One of these had the coat of arms of George IV of England engraved on its side. Down the coast, a little way from the mouth of the Du River, is an old rock with some half obliterated names carved on its face; the "Slaver's Rock", it is called by the natives, and the names are those of men famous in the days of the slave trade. Some of the coast tribes still wear a blue tattoo mark running down the forehead to the bridge of the nose. Years ago that mark was the emblem of partnership with the slavers, and signified that tribesmen bearing it must not be caught and sold as slaves. Back of Cape Mount, up a river where fallen logs and sand bars form a barrier against all but the smallest canoes, decaying walls and brass cannon hide the story of one of Dom

Pedro's strongholds. From here there was a trail that led to the old slave route to Timbuktu. Old men of the forest tribes still remember the tradition of that great road, with its caravans of yoked slaves and here and there a little huddle of bones, where the weak had died or been killed by the wayside; but now the forest trees have eaten up those bones and the tales are almost forgotten. History no longer recounts these stories of the West African Coast—only the old cannon and the mouldering walls remember them.

Therefore, the written history of Liberia begins with the story of the colonists from America, who were sent back to Africa in the beginning of the nineteenth century, because both they and their friends believed they were Africans. They were negroes and negroes came from Africa, therefore in Africa would be a place for them. That was the first mistake, because while the colonists were negroes, they were not Africans. None of them knew from what part of Africa their forefathers had come nor the language they had spoken. Neither did any of them remember the ways of Africa, and because of these things, they found themselves in a world as strangely different as the first English settlers had found in Virginia. For a long time they relied on the ship's stores and the supplies brought from

abroad, while they set about building homesteads and laying out little farms, just as those Virginian settlers had done two hundred years before in America.

On the broad straight streets of Monrovia and on the banks of the rivers, the houses set up by the first colonists are still to be seen: two and three story red brick buildings with white pillars and high pitched roofs, as charming as the old homesteads of the eighteenth century southern planter. They laid out plantations of sugar cane and planted fruits and vegetables. In this new land they were the masters, duplicating as far as their limitations would allow, the life of the masters some of them had known.

In those early days, no one seems to have bothered very much about the national or future government of the land. They established a small town government modelled on the city and town government of the land whence they had come. They were not very experienced and they knew little of the machinery of state or the science of government. Thus for a while their town government served, and they never missed the laws of state or nation that give authority to the town. When any difficulty occurred or the need of a legal foundation could not be ignored, it was understood and taken as established, that the common law of England and America was the law

of their land. The great unwritten code of their forefathers—that had existed for thousands of years and exists today, governing every act and providing for every necessity—these negroes had never known.

As the colonists prospered a little, they built churches and small towns. The African gods of their forefathers they did not know, for in America these traditions had been lost, and the colonists and their fathers had been members of one or another denomination of the Protestant churches of America. In this way it came about that each little group, when sufficient prosperity permitted, divided themselves and built churches for the particular sect to which they had belonged. Their social life centred about their churches; they enjoyed their Sundays and they prayed and wrestled with their souls. Strangely, every scrap of written evidence shows that these Americans considered themselves Africans, and this idea was strengthened as the memory of the life and difficulties from which they had fled grew dimmer and dimmer.

The real Africans living in the bush around them had customs, laws and religious beliefs of which these colonists had no knowledge, no remembrance and, in the beginning, little or no contact. In the new churches these native people were referred to

as heathens, as infidels, as savages. The colonists' idea of their superiority over the native African was most pleasing to their minds, and it was under these circumstances there grew and developed the superiority complex which has distinguished their past attitude toward other Africans and has caused as much trouble as any of the original conditions from which they themselves had fled.

This superiority complex first resulted in the setting up of a caste distinction between the original colonists and the civilized, dark-skinned, more full-blooded Coast negroes about them. The ensuing bitter resentment led to difficulties, even to some of the wars with the natives. Until forty years ago no black-skinned man had a chance to be elected to high office. Such honours were reserved for the members of the oligarchy of the brown-skinned. Until the time of President Coleman no chance had come to the blacks to break into the sacred ranks. At last, as the original families died off, or their descendants intermarried with the darker and later immigrants from the Coast, there came a political line-up of increasing blacks against decreasing browns and the defeat and final destruction of brown political supremacy. This was the first step towards the admission of the unmixed African into the oligarchy of the Coast—there being less antagonism between

the black-skinned politician and his racial half-brother of the bush.

The dissension, hatred and inaction to which this caste idea gave birth had torn the little colony with political strife from one end to the other. It was not even limited to their own internal affairs, but extended to the other people of the Coast, and to this day, the Liberian looks with something akin to contempt at West Africans from the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Ivory and the Gold Coast. It is not that he has any particular grudge against these people; it is simply because he is a Liberian, and the idea of his superiority is part of his heritage.

Many causes led to the downfall of brown supremacy. Most of these causes are still operating against the Coast Liberian, and are an important factor directing the development of his future. Perhaps the most important of these is the fact that men of negro race, living under tribal conditions in West Africa, have developed a very considerable immunity against malaria, dysentery and sun. A generation or two in a temperate climate, or even in a subtropical climate, where such immunity is unnecessary, serves to destroy the resistance that has been built up. The settlers who founded Liberia, just as new immigrants who come there today, found their numbers decreasing, their families dying out.

As American emigration gradually decreased and the brown stock ceased to be replenished, it was only a matter of time until those of mixed native blood came to supremacy. This same cause is gradually bringing the tribesmen into a more powerful position and amalgamating the races. Today immigrants from temperate climates find it necessary to take all the precautions for the preservation of health that men of white race take if they are to live in West Africa, and just as men of the white race find it difficult to rear their children in West Africa, so immigrants of the black race find infant mortality high.

The problems of the colonists increased as Africa was parcelled out among the various nations. They needed taxes and they needed revenue from customs; but they had difficulty collecting from foreigners. They were asked who they were, whether Americans or British or what. They only knew they were colonists and planters; that they had a mission to regulate the affairs of the heathen. No one of these propositions seemed to answer the question. In the dilemma someone advised them to be themselves, and they considered this idea. The younger generation took counsel with the old and there ensued perplexity and discussion out of which one idea stood clear and bright—they were free. So was born the

new nation, and this land and these puzzled people became Liberia.

They made their capital Monrovia, called after the President of the United States, Monroe. They still unconsciously looked to America, their home-land, and in trouble or in difficulty turned to America, American ideas and American names. I think America and old Mother Africa must have exchanged smiles across the sea over these children who were not Africans. It was only the people of America and the people of Liberia who misunderstood. America, the land, knew these people for her sons, and Africa received them as such. Years were to pass, but the time was coming when these dark-skinned Americans would recognize their cultural home-land, and in that knowledge, turn toward it for the assistance in self-government they were to need. Over in America, too, the time would come when the situation would be understood, and that need would be met and the assistance given, just as a family helps one of its sons. Yet at the time when Liberia became a nation, and during the early years of which I speak, these things were not clear—and America was very far away.

When Liberia proclaimed itself a free and independent nation, the colonists found that their difficulties were not settled. On the contrary, they were

increased. They had one great question to settle—that was the problem of nationality as distinguished from race. In going to Africa in the beginning, their friends in America and they themselves had accepted and acted upon the belief that a negro must necessarily be an African. They had no clear sense of national consciousness. The dominant and dependent race idea, at that time in effect in America, had been accepted by them as a geographical condition. In America the white men were dominant, in Africa the cultivated negro would take the dominant status. Their unconscious objective was to establish themselves in Africa as the dominant race. They had to learn by bitter experience that their whole theory of life was founded in error; this is the story of Liberia that has never been written.

The development of a national consciousness is a subject on which much has been written and little understood. It is homeland and government that divide mankind, not racial origin. When opportunity is denied in the homeland, or in the government of that homeland, men fight or leave. Written history, from the Exodus of the Old Testament to the emigration of the unemployed of Great Britain, steadfastly confirms this fact. The Liberian colonists had left America because opportunity was denied them, just as American colonists had left the

old world and come to the new. The American colonists remained Europeans until 1776 when they became Americans, and the Liberian colonists remained Americans until they founded a government of their own.

The new government of Liberia was founded improvidently, without sufficient study or knowledge of the conditions to be met. It was a constitutional democracy modelled after the system of the United States of America, and Liberia's constitution was written in America. But in spite of the preamble of the constitution, setting forth equal rights and opportunities, it actually contemplated the tribesman only as and when he became a Christian and a citizen,—detribalized. Today there are ten thousand descendants of those colonists maintaining their political supremacy and endeavouring to administer the affairs of over a million tribesmen who have no representation in the government. It is no wonder that Liberian politicians have to sit up long of nights to consider ways and means to apply that constitution.

The first requirement of government is that it shall be suited to the needs of the people to be governed, and the most advanced—yet most complicated—form of government man has devised is the constitutional democracy. This form of govern-

ment is the expression which has developed from generations of customary law, religion, convention and the methods of thought of Western civilization. Such a governmental system, if it is to be successful, must not only be understood and applied, but it must carry with it economic opportunity and the right to share in its legislation and administration. Failing these points, a system of government tends to destroy or at least hinder the development of national consciousness. If the founders of Liberia had given a little more thought to the "heathen" as a part of the nation, and to his laws, customs, and religion, there would have been less difficulty in building up a national consciousness. Certainly, the first fifty years of the existence of the Republic is a story of warfare with the tribes, and there is no evidence of any real approach to national unity during that time.

The African tribesman has developed through thousands of years a culture and a civilization radically different from that of the Western world. From the east coast of central Africa, extending in a broad belt straight across the continent to the west coast, south of the Soudan, there is a marked similarity in the laws and customs of every tribe. Where differences do occur, they can nearly always be traced to a migration of some warlike tribe from the north, which has driven a little wedge of foreign

culture into this belt. This culture and civilization has lost its impetus and has crystallized into a conservatism such as exists in no other race. This conservatism is protected and surrounded by customary law and ritual that provides for every contingency and the most intimate acts of life. To be born an African tribesman means to be born with this heritage; for an African to accept a new culture he must become detribalized.

It is difficult for a man of Western civilization to comprehend the full significance of detribalization, because the Western man has as his heritage his own conventions, religion and customary law; it is along these lines that the Westerner thinks, reasons, weighs and compares. The tribesman rarely understands the possession of real property because all land is tribal. Only to a limited extent does he understand personal property, according to the Western concept, because that belongs to the clan or family. Polygamy is general; but every man or woman belongs to someone; above all to the clan. The relation of children to their parents is different from that of the West because of the clan ownership, and the head of the clan, in case of necessity, can pawn, in a system of limited slavery, any member of that clan. Property does not descend from father to son, but usually from brother to brother.

The religious beliefs, as I have explained in previous chapters, form a complicated system of ancestor worship, fertility cults, and the belief in good and evil spirits. With the tribal government is associated the spiritual government administered from the Devil Bush. The proceedings of the Devil Bush are jealously guarded secrets which no self-respecting native will talk about. One branch of the Devil Bush is the school to which every boy or girl is sent from six months to six years of his life for practical as well as religious instruction.

Detribalization means the severance of the native from all of these things, and unless it is accompanied by the ability to live a new economic life and to be fully satisfied with an entirely new social condition, its compulsion can never be justified by those who have dared to sponsor it.

When the colonists first landed on the West African Coast they purchased land and became settlers. They had then no native question other than the maintenance of good relations with native neighbours. This situation was radically changed when they claimed a large territory inhabited by native tribes, and over that territory set up a government of control. After that step they had to accept full responsibility for their subject peoples, whose pro-

tection, development and eventual share in the national existence they had in charge.

There were two apparent solutions of the Liberian native question. It would be too much to say the policy adopted was a deliberate choice between considered possibilities. It was rather a course of action into which they drifted. This was in effect the setting up of a dominant and subject race condition. The fallacy of this idea is its instability, as no race in a dependent position has ever rested content with its status, and constant effort to secure an improved condition is met by equally determined repression. The end is the absorption or extermination of the weaker people; or under certain conditions, when the subject race has a vast majority of numbers, it may absorb the dominant race and itself become dominant.

The alternative looks toward a settlement based on racial and political equality of opportunity. As a beginning it would establish a native assembly composed of tribal leaders from those tribes already in friendly contact with the government. As outlying tribes were brought under authority, their representatives would be admitted to membership. At first such a body could be allowed but few privileges, but it would be invaluable as a training place and safety valve. The explanation of matters concern-

ing tribal relations and the hearing of complaints would bring the government and the tribes to a better understanding. It would also eliminate any discontent because of taxation without representation, and pave the way for a future political merger of interior and coast. As ability was demonstrated, this assembly could be incorporated in the legislative branch of the national government.

In the early days of the Republic no serious consideration was given to such a plan. On the contrary, every effort was made to establish permanently the dominant race. There is no black and white race question in Liberia. There the question is citizen against tribesman, and this will never be settled until the sons of both equally can say, "I am a Liberian".

CHAPTER XI

WITH A BRICK IN ONE HAND

THE early founders of Liberia were not unlike the fathers of some of our own American cities, who lived prosperously and passed the bond-payment problems on to the future. They never met the real issues; in fact, never knew they existed. They lived on, and died in their big houses surrounded by fields of coffee, sugar, cassava and the fruits they had come to know. On their big wide verandas there was shade and comfort, while tribesmen worked in their broad fields as bond servants. A few miles back was the native frontier where they dared not pass. Their new constitution was not understood back there.

The more the history of Liberia is studied the more one is impressed with the fortitude of the Liberian colonist. He knew nothing of the problems before him, and was misguided and misled, but through it all he courageously faced the dangers of fever, sun, wild beasts and war with the antagonistic

tribesmen, with the same determination that he fought the ever-encroaching jungle that strove to destroy his farms.

If there were to be a national government, there could only be one supreme law; but there had to be enough peace between the tribes for it to be explained and enforced. Peace meant life to the colonists and life to the new Republic, but, as Africa preferred her own laws to those of the Americans who had become Liberians, submission was compelled only by the force of arms. For a good many years all the strength and intelligence of the new government was used in this way. Other nations sent soldiers to their West African colonies to protect their farmers and merchants; but the people of this new nation had no such help. What little help they did receive, they remember; but the price of the peace they had made and paid for with their own flesh and blood, was a heavy one. They literally fought with their backs to the wall; there were times when the loss of one battle would have been their end. They were thirty-five thousand in numbers once, but between disease and war, at the end of one hundred years, their descendants number perhaps ten thousand.

During much of this time, they had no one to guide them and no one to turn to, and as men will

when they are tired, they fought blindly. Once or twice they turned to other nations for assistance; but Africa was being divided up then into colonies, spheres of influence and trusteeships for the natives. That really meant that someone was taking the land that was not theirs, with the intention of paying as little as possible for it. These nations had to learn the same lesson that Liberia was learning, that no one gets something for nothing in Africa. Thus when Liberia asked for aid or entered into treaties, her people found they lost every time. They lost territory, and more than once, they almost lost Liberia.

The sugar markets that her people had established through years of effort, gradually failed because new methods in other lands had made their product of too little value to export; so they stopped growing and exporting large crops of sugar. When they had developed a market for their good indigenous coffee, other nations took their seeds and scions to grow "Liberian coffee". The world never knew it was not grown in Liberia. Today, you can buy "Liberian coffee" in American markets; but not one pound of that coffee ever saw Liberia. The people were too busy with their difficulties to develop new crops in place of sugar, and their educated men were too occupied in their effort to maintain the nation to stop

and fight the coffee thieves. The big plantations grew up in weeds, and the timbers of the big houses fell into decay so that they could not sit on the verandas any more.

The caste discrimination between the brown-skinned colonists and the darker-skinned, later immigrants and Coast people, had far-reaching effects on the political and social structure of the new nation. The final defeat of the brown-skinned destroyed to a very great extent this caste system in its original form; but the resulting political union of the brown and black citizens gave, in effect, new life to this old idea by increasing caste discrimination more strongly than ever against the Liberian tribesmen. It was not until the presidency of Arthur Barclay twenty-five years ago, that any Liberian official had dared to proclaim the necessity of admitting in practice, as well as theory, the right of tribesmen to hold office equally with the sons of the Liberian colonists. In this second phase of the caste system there had developed a strong conviction that the Liberian colonists had been sent to Africa to bring spiritual light to heathen darkness; that they were the people chosen to bring conversion to creatures living in wickedness, who were only fit for hell-fire in their present condition.

Notwithstanding this conviction of their mission,

the Liberian citizens were conscious that something was wrong; that their burdens were greater than they should have been. They turned with increasing fervour to their churches for help.

No one can comprehend Liberia who does not understand or correctly estimate the influence of the churches there. Every sect and denomination known in America has its members among the Liberians. Every Missionary Society had sent representatives to the new nation that recognized as its mission the bringing of light to the heathen, and who bestowed, as their highest decoration, "the Order of African Redemption", with its motto, "Lux in Tenebræ". But the long period of the native wars continued until nearly thirty years ago. Even after that there were two serious outbreaks, the Kru war of 1917 and the Jacquelli war of 1920. When, however, the Constitution stood over all the land, the government had been extended in much the same way as the Old Testament tells us Nehemiah built the walls of Jerusalem, with the citizenry working with a brick in one hand and a sword in the other.

But after war and conquest comes administration. The Constitution did not apply as completely as they had thought it would, as there were not enough educated Liberians to explain it to the natives. It was part of an economic, educational and political system

of which the natives had never heard, and under which they had no means of living. There was first one compromise, and then another, until something workable was developed. This is how the two systems of government became incorporated in the law of the land: African customary law for the African tribesmen, and modern statute law for the Liberian citizens. The greatest benefit that was gained by the wars was that the tribes were compelled to acknowledge the supremacy of the Government of the Republic. This was the time to begin a native assembly and plan for the future as a united people. Unfortunately there was too much bitterness on both sides. The vanquished sulked in the forest, nursing their wounds. The victors counted their dead, and realized that with their lessening numbers, they could afford no more long wars. Fear and the bitterness of misunderstanding were to keep these people apart a long time.

Immigration from America had largely stopped by 1865. The urge to emigrate had lessened, for in the war in which Americans had fought brother against brother, father against son, white man against white man, one of the injustices from which the colonists had fled was settled.

The peace that followed the cessation of native wars brought a new era with new problems. The

sugar export business was gone and much of the old life was gone because smiling fields and heavy crops do not go with war; prosperity was at a low ebb—but the native frontier was gone too. It was then Liberia turned to native trade. Traders had always been on the coast, but now the Germans, British, and a few Dutch handled the import and export trade, while the colonists became middlemen between them and the native tribes. Gradually the country was opened to trade and the colonists thought of roads. They borrowed enough from some of their foreign neighbours to build the first good road, but before they had completed it, they had paved twelve miles with solid though invisible gold—they were paying for education as well as a road. It was after this experience that they placed their first real loan.

Just before the World War, Liberian conditions were beginning to improve. A few plantations of sugar cane were keeping some of her people prosperous; one of the Mohammedan tribes had taken to coffee growing, and was entering a new economic life. Other tribesmen near the coast were preparing piassava fibre, which the world needs for street-cleaning brooms and other things. The demand for vegetable fats and oils was making the export of palm kernels a profitable business. The German

traders now had control of most of the business of the country and were building fine tropical houses, shops and warehouses of concrete and steel. Liberia's new refunding loan had paid off the accumulation of debts which had grown up during the long troubled period and in the construction of the golden road. This had helped a little to organize the fiscal service; but it also had serious consequences—as a part of the security of the loan, Liberia assigned most of the funds that supported her public education.

All through the story of Liberia's struggles, I have referred to the various false concepts that have perplexed and hindered her people. At first, it was the belief that they, as negroes, must necessarily be Africans; later it was brown-skinned superiority, then it was the caste supremacy of citizen over tribesman. Now a new blunder threatened the future. All of her leaders had been members of one religious denomination or another, and the majority of her educated younger sons had been students of theology. These leaders had been closer in their ideals and training to the mission complex than they had to an understanding of the economics of their state. When the Government assigned its school funds they believed the Mission Schools could take over the education of their children; there were

plenty of Mission Schools and there was plenty of money from America to maintain them. The Mission Schools, believing in the Liberian complex, took over the work.

The Mission Schools were systematized and equipped not for the training of statesmen, administrators, government clerks, stenographers, mechanics, and agriculturists—which the country must have if it is to survive—they were specialized for the purpose of training ministers of the gospel and "native workers" to aid in missionary work. Their substitution for the public schools and colleges put on them a burden for which they had never been intended.

The seriousness of this mistake is only now beginning to be appreciated by the Missions and by the Liberian people. The new system came into effect in 1911. It was several years before the Liberian leaders discovered that the educational balance had been destroyed. Before anything could be done to correct this, circumstances intervened to cause further delay, and twelve years were to pass before the problem could be faced with any hope of solution. During that twelve years Liberian schools continued largely by the aid of Mission funds. Industrial as well as business training ceased.

In 1914 the great war commenced. Within a few

days, its dark shadow crept down the Coast and spread over West Africa. The German colonies armed; the British and French colonies armed. To the north and south Liberia was surrounded by war and forgotten. Ships no longer dropped anchor in the harbours. One day, the cable was cut. The exports upon which her trade and prosperity depended lay rotting in the warehouses and as the stores sold out their stock, business collapsed. Revenues of the government ceased, and Liberia, a neutral nation, found herself in the same position as if she had been a blockaded enemy.

When the great farms went out of existence Liberia had ceased to be self-sustaining and was forced to import not only cutlery, tools, implements and arms, but most of the food stuffs such as sugar, flour, beef, milk; most important of all—her staple diet, rice. These imports were no longer possible now, even had there been the money to buy them. Not the least of her troubles was the large German population, marooned and cut off, but inspired by an ardent determination to be of some assistance to their fatherland. It was this last contingency, coupled with the necessity of reopening the channels of export and import, that led Liberia to declare war on the side of the Allies of the West. To add to their burdens during this period there was an epi-

demic of influenza and pneumonia, which took its toll of life because the necessary drugs could not be procured or the proper care given the sick. Government clerks stuck faithfully to their posts, and for their salaries, accepted paper promises to pay at some future date, because there was no money to pay them. The people managed somehow to exist on native food, and sustained by their faith in Providence, awaited the end of the war.

When the Peace Treaty of Versailles was signed Liberia's President-elect, at that time Secretary of State, was one of the signers of that document, and Liberia became a member of the League of Nations. In the debates preliminary to that treaty and in the secret discussions by which spheres of influence and mandates were set up, Liberia realized the urgent need of a powerful friend. It was then the Liberians again remembered their American origin and turned to the United States for assistance.

The enormous loss occasioned by the destruction of trade over such a long period could not be recovered as a war claim; but at the end of the war there were few countries in the world that showed more devastation than Liberia. It was not the devastation of an enemy army, but the devastation wrought by poverty, isolation and a sinister climate. In West Africa, buildings must be constantly re-

paired or even the stoutest timbers crumble to dust under the attack of termites. Foundations are always being undermined by moisture and fungi; boats not tarred every three months are riddled by the teredo; unpainted iron quickly falls in rusty flakes, and the ever advancing jungle will swallow a farm as rapidly as if it were being covered by a planted crop.

The Government attempted to negotiate a loan for the rehabilitation of the country; but by 1923, it was apparent that the credit of the country had been so impaired during the long period, that until revenue and income could be increased, no further foreign credit could be procured on terms acceptable to the Republic. It was not only a question of financial rehabilitation, but the actual existence of the Republic was at stake. Financial collapse is one thing, but a complete destruction of credit is another, and that was Liberia's plight.

Fortunately, the younger generation, less isolated, had come into power politically, and the President and the men forming his cabinet were men of ability and determination. Closer contact with the tribesmen, too, had brought to the Liberian state a new influence of profound conservatism, which manifests itself in patience and caution. The old hasty,

unconsidered decisions of the early days did not recur after 1920.

Superficial financial remedies were of no avail. The situation was desperate and called for vigorous measures. The Executive Government, the Legislative Branch and the Financial Adviser consulted together, and it was decided that the budget must be balanced at whatever cost. This left no money for schools, and education was continued under the Mission Schools for a few years longer.

The four years following 1923 were hard, almost as hard as the war period; but during that time the budget was balanced. It was not a balancing on paper with short-term borrowing and inflation to hide the deficit; Liberia was not modern enough for that. There was so little money that every dollar was earmarked months in advance and the possible revenues calculated to the last cent. Expenditures were administered with rigid economy and every necessary expense cut to the bone.

Liberia emerged from that four years of strict economy a new country. Foreign obligations nearly adjusted, internal debts either paid off or funded, her credit completely restored. Certainly a record of which any nation could be proud. Since the ocean freighters were vital to Liberian trade, lighthouses were set up; today, the three most powerful lights on

the entire West Coast of Africa mark the three capes of Liberia's coast. More than two hundred miles of reasonably good gravelled road had been built, not only on the coast, but in the interior as well. New buildings and new roofs everywhere showed activity and repairs in progress. All of this was accomplished without further borrowing.

Liberia's setting her house in order went deeper than mere administration in the collection and expenditure of her revenues. The questions of increasing revenue and foreign trade, aiding her own people in various ways and getting her credit back on a sound basis went hand in hand. It was recognized that the investment of foreign capital would materially hasten these objectives, therefore a limited amount of foreign capital could be welcomed. I say a limited amount, because it must be understood that Liberia is being developed for its own people, not for foreigners, and unless the mutual benefit is clear and assured, the Government policy prefers the slower course of purely internal progress.

In the period of which I speak, it was necessary to get capital invested in order to increase the money available for circulation and to put the Liberian people back on their financial feet again. As it would have been an unprofitable effort to restore the sugar industry, Liberia considered rubber and re-

moved its export duties. Foreign capital was only too willing to invest in a country that had demonstrated such capacity for self-recovery. The much-needed loan had now become an immediate possibility. In order to build bridges for the roads, encourage agriculture, and re-establish a proper school system, a further bond issue was made and the old ones refunded; paying off at the same time the balance of her war debt. The increased revenues and the investment of foreign capital now furnished the credit and income necessary to enable all this to be accomplished with less burden than had been expected. Today, Liberia is beginning to consider the problem of her educational system, recognizing that on its successful solution depends her future.

CHAPTER XII

A KING WHO KNEW NOT JOSEPH

In the days when Liberia was struggling to rebuild there was only a very small surplus from current revenues available for public works, but it was decided that new lighthouses should be built. Looking back at those years, the obstacles that were overcome, and the spirit in which the work was done, it seems to me that there is stronger fellowship, closer understanding and more real fun in construction work when there is little with which to work and less from which to build. There was no concrete mixer, no reinforcing material, there were few—if any—trained workmen. The engineers prowled around the dumps and thought seriously of stealing one or two of the iron rods from some of the foreign traders' houses. I fear that several times they did more than think.

A wooden hogshead mounted on a frame with a swivel served as a concrete mixer. Five gallon oil tins made admirable substitutes for wheelbarrows.

Small hammers, mashed thumbs and patience served as a rock crusher, but finally the towers went up reinforced with old Decauville track and telegraph wire. One of them is seventy feet high. When the work was done and the light apparatus installed on the top, they were as symmetrical and as durable as those built with more modern tools. I remember the pride with which the Chief of Construction hammered the side of the concrete shell of the first tower, and how the dull ringing boom, that answered the blow, told all of us that tower was solid. The lighthouse was such a fine piece of work that it merited a proper setting. A space was levelled on the top of the Cape, decked with concrete and surrounded by a parapet on which were mounted two of the ancient muzzle-loading cannon. These had lain on the top of the hill since the days of the fights with the slave traders. After it was all done, a ration of gin was served out to the men. When the light was turned on and its four revolving twenty-eight mile beams slowly turned like searchlights across the jungle and out over the sea, people came for many miles to see this new thing. Those beams of light revolving each night over the capital city, and stabbing through the haze or the silver sheen of the rains, symbolized the new spirit that had come to the Coast.

The carpenters, masons, and tribesmen who had

had a hand in the building of those lighthouses took an honest pride in their work, and felt they were a little above the common people. In this way was formed the beginning of a small skilled body of labourers who became known as "Red Shirts" from their uniforms, which consisted of navy blue shorts, bright red shirts with a double row of brass buttons, a green fez and a green cummerbund with a machete hanging from it. It was no small thing these men had accomplished, for in the bush, the nearest approach to a straight line is a reasonably straight stick. There is no such thing as a screw or a bolt, and there is no such thing as a wheel. When these African labourers started construction work all these things had to be taught. Heavy planks and timbers were cut with a hand saw, and in those days rocks had to be broken by hand as there was no powder. It was no wonder the "Red Shirts" and their green-shirted foremen walked with a swagger—they were "big past" their less fortunate friends.

The crying need of the country was roads, but there was no money available. There was plenty of labour, however, and the order went out to the tribesmen that roads must be built. Each chief was made responsible for his district, and the engineers came and surveyed the right of way. There had

once been a road roller used on the Golden Road, but for many years insects had nested in its tubes; vines and jungle flowers had covered its wheels. That road roller would never run again. There were no scarifiers, no ploughs, no tools, no dynamite. The bush people had knives, many of which they had made themselves, hammered out after the ancient way of the first iron workers over a palm-kernel charcoal fire between two stones.

Years ago when Hanno, the Carthaginian, sailed down the West Coast, he wrote in his ship's log that he had reached a place where the land seemed on fire, and at the time of which I speak, the newspaper men with the Prince of Wales, on his trip to the West African colonies, reported that the natives on the Coast lighted bonfires in honour of the Prince as he passed in his ship. Neither Hanno nor the newspaper men understood that the natives were making farms and that for thousands of years it had been the custom to cut down the brush and burn it in the dry season and in those burned-over clearings plant their rice. Therefore, there was no lack of skill in the clearing of brush with knives or the felling of great trees by fire; but that was only the first part of the work.

When a huge boulder was encountered in the right of way, vine ropes were put around it, and it

was partially undermined with flattened sticks used as shovels. Then the labourers pulled on the vines, ten or fifty or two hundred, and the boulder was rolled away. When the stones were smaller and could be broken they were cracked with another stone and the pieces carried away on the labourers' heads. Ledges were pounded down; but if that did not serve, a fire was built and the rock heated. Then cans of cold water were poured on the rock to crack it and the pieces were carried away, just as the pieces of the small boulders were carried. When a ridge was too strong, or too high, the road went around. Cuts in hills and fills in hollows were made with the little sticks, and the loosened dirt carried off in oil cans or baskets. Over all the work was the throb of the native drums sending out a rhythmic beat timed to a dog trot, and the men ran like ants, each with his grain of sand. The labourers made up songs as they worked, and they worked and sang in time to the drums. The songs told about the road, where it was going, or how hard the work was and how they were going to master a big stone. Sometimes they sang about their food, whether they were hungry or whether they were tired, and when an overseer was dismissed and subsequently reinstated, they sang all day, "Momo Grey bobs up and down".

It is fun to build bridges and to drive through a

The crying need of the country was roads.

Cuts in hills and fills in hollows were made with the little sticks.

It is fun to build bridges and drive through a road like that.

road like that, for in most of those bridges, there was not a spike or a nail, just great logs laid criss-cross to form an embankment, and then straight logs laid over and the whole covered with dirt. They are far more beautiful and perfect bridges in the eyes of their first builders than the new bridges of concrete and steel which are coming to take their place. When the first automobiles went out on the roads over those bridges, the native labourers ran into the bushes or into the ditches and stood tense, ready to run. No man knew where those things would go or what they would do. They told each other that the electric sirens were the yells of Country Devils of the land from whence the cars had come; but the more sophisticated Coast natives, who were working on the roads, told the others that the cars were land-steamers, called after the steamships they had seen. The saws they used to cut the timbers for the bridges they called, "He-come-he-go".

The chiefs from the interior took tremendous pride in these roads and marched in state to meet each other or to meet the Government officials, with their fongo boys playing on their drums and singing songs about the chief or the road, bragging how much better it was than the road in the other chief's country. Behind the chief walked his stool bearer, his favourite wife, a retinue of servants and several

guards. There was pride in the spirit of progress and pride in the new roads. The work went on with a will and men marched up and down those roads and pounded them level with their bare feet, aided by the tropical rains. Miles of sand were covered with gravel. One fill extended six miles. Two hundred miles of automobile roads were constructed in this fashion at a cost of less than five thousand dollars.

Along with the roads, telephone lines were started; but here the jungle fought back. Old residents in the tropics will always say that the coming of roads, telephones, postal service, automobiles and new ways of life spoil a country. The primitive things, the silences, the long waits for news, the open hospitality and good fellowship of the early days go, and a new era dawns in which competition, greed, intrigue for promotion, increased expense and the constant instructions, orders and reports change the old ways into a shoddy imitation of life in the Western lands. When the first wires spread across the jungle one realized with regret that the old days were drawing toward their close—soon would come modern plantations, time clocks, measured labour and men who knew not Africa—then the old honesty, the clean charm of the bush with all its

wild beauty would be gone. One was inclined to side with the resistance of the jungle.

The elephants pushed down the triangulation towers, and insects and bush cows destroyed the telephone poles. Great vines reached up and twined around the wires and short circuited the electric currents. The Country Devil howled all night long in the sacred Devil Bush while the throbbing drums in the telegraphy of Africa carried messages against the new wires far and wide. Telephone lines proved expensive to maintain and for long distances they had to be abandoned; but the determination of the new spirit that was abroad was not to be deterred. Long wave wireless was not successful because on some days static interference limited the station to a distance of fifty miles, and then the Government's American engineers decided on short wave wireless and in the Government stations designed, assembled, and constructed the apparatus which was to connect the coast and the interior in an invisible network the jungle could not destroy. One night they had finished the construction of a short wave receiver and loud speaker, and the people gathered around the station attracted by the music of a band playing in Schenectady, New York.

Even that was not enough. The Chief Engineer became morose, disinclined to talk, and wandered

about examining the wrecks of cars, or pawing over junk heaps. It looked like a touch of the sun. One night when the American Consul and some Liberian officials were in my house talking, the Chief Engineer burst in, his disreputable pipe hanging out of his mouth and the haggard look of sleepless nights on his face.

"Fellows, I've got the combination, I'm going to call up New York". Then we were sure it was sun; but followed him over to the radio station, quite dark, except for one green shaded light over a new apparatus, which to the uninitiated looked like typewriter bottoms and copper tubing, as indeed it largely was. A new antenna was strung from the house top with rope and led in through a window. We sat in the shadows and watched the flicker and flare of the vacuum tubes. The operator's key kept up a continuous rhythm, and white-bellied lizards chasing bugs scratched and ran over the glass of the windows. The minutes passed and then, "— — — ; — — — ; — — — ; New York is answering". The first direct communication between West Africa and the United States of America had been established through an apparatus assembled from scrap. The operator in New York kept repeating, "Stop your lying, I don't believe you're calling from Africa". What was left of the night was given over to proper

celebration. Two days later the American Consul received a cable asking if it were true; but that did not lessen our triumph. The Liberian Government was justly proud of that accomplishment, and later, when its representative sat at the International Radio Conference in Washington, he was the only delegate in that body who had received his credentials by wireless, as Liberia is so far away notification by post could not have reached him in time.

The Red Shirts had expanded to a considerable body since the building of the first lighthouse, and there was an *esprit de corps* among them that would rival many a crack military organization. The best of the men had been sent in from the hinterland, chosen by their own people for their training. Few of them spoke English. A candidate worked on probation without pay, until on the recommendation of his foreman he was made a member of the organization. He then received his uniform which carried with it a salary of one pound a month and his food. Men fresh from the bush learned in a few months to drive trucks, assemble telephone instruments, to erect poles and splice wires.

I do not believe that any concrete mixer in the world ever was put to bed with the ceremony used on the one up country where the Red Shirts were erecting concrete pylons for a cable across a river.

That machine was washed, oiled and told about the work it had to do next day. Then it was carefully covered up, and finally an armed guard sat down beside it to see that nothing disturbed its rest through the night, for these children of the bush endow everything with a spirit. I never will forget one of the Red Shirts patting the mixer affectionately and crooning, "Now I give you small oil so-o. You no make palava morning time". He doused it lavishly with oil and then regarded it thoughtfully. "I give you small more". Then he looked up at me. "He fit work plenty". He had used a quart of oil but he was not reproved. Oil was cheaper than repairs.

In a time of emergency one of these boys, Zizzi Number Two by name, sat on the window-sill watching his boss run a mimeograph. He watched steadfastly for half an hour, jumped down and said, "Massah, I fit make dat." He was. He ran that machine, with pride, for twenty-two hours and when at daylight the work was done, he refused to go to bed because it being Monday he was afraid someone else would drive his truck. Some weeks later a delegation of his people came with presents to his boss and asked for his release, that he might return to his village far in the interior to be their chief, but Zizzi Number Two begged the supervisor not to let

him go—there was so much more he wanted to learn.

Last year dynamite and an air compressor brought new glories to the Red Shirts. When for the first time an air drill started "eating" the rocks, crowds gathered to watch it and great was their pride in this new machine. Soon they mastered this new way as they had the other things, and were able to handle it as well as the blasting, with little or no supervision. They blasted out roads and post holes; the louder the racket the more they enjoyed it, as each shot was a triumph. Their skill and luck held, for no one was injured during the period of which I speak.

The whole organization of the Red Shirts was run in accordance with native customary law and the men themselves were quick to condemn and punish or expel any man guilty of the infraction of a rule. They were forbidden to sell or dispose of their clothes, and ragged clothes had to be surrendered for new ones; but like all Africans, they were inveterate gamblers. For a little while, led on by the encouragement of one of their sergeants, a lot of gambling had gone on, in the excitement of which several pairs of pants changed owners. At sunset when they lined up to salute the flag this was noticed and a "palava" was called to inquire into the question of the missing pants. When the true state of affairs

was brought out, the sergeant admitted his responsibility, was fined, and all gambled property ordered returned. Those who recovered their pants organized a dance, and those who had been deprived of their gains were laughed at until they took part in the dance as good naturedly as the rest.

When the men were paid their "moon money" it was handed first to the headman, then by him to the sergeant, who in turn passed it to each corporal. The last corporal then handed it to the man to whom it was due, and in this way authority was symbolized before the whole line of waiting men. On "moon money" night there was always a dance in which, of course, only men took part, because only the sergeants were allowed to have their wives with them.

The men of the organization received medical attention, and it was interesting to see the way these bush people appreciated the difference between a real doctor and the witch doctor, astrologer, or quack of the Coast, who is often the only person available for the treatment of disease. The Red Shirts were rationed on palm oil, country rice or half polished rice, dried fish, soap, tobacco and salt. Sometimes for a reward at the end of a job a cow or some goats made them a special treat, but their staple food was rice.

The activity of the Red Shirts was not limited

In most of those bridges there was not a spike or a nail.

The chiefs from the interior took tremendous pride in these roads.

At the streams, rafts had to be constructed or bridges made.

Valuable telescopes and delicate instruments had to be transported long distances through the jungle.

to construction work on the coast. One section was assigned to the engineers in charge of the boundary delimitation. For this work valuable telescopes and delicate instruments had to be transported long distances through the jungle over rough country. As in most undeveloped parts of Africa, where roads have not been built, this necessitated a number of porters, each of whom will carry a load of from forty to sixty pounds on his head. With the larger telescopes it was necessary to sling them on poles that were borne by several men. At the streams rafts had to be constructed or bridges made of felled trees. In some places the tribesmen have constructed suspension bridges made of great ropes of interlaced vines on which a foot path is fashioned of small cross sticks. The hand rail consists of another rope of vines. When new these bridges are surprisingly strong, but in spite of the enormous amount of labour required to make them, they do not last long as the vines soon dry out.

It was the duty of the Red Shirts to watch the porters, assist in the adjustment of loads and to see that nothing was broken or lost. They had to go ahead to the towns to advise the chief of the need of rations, sleeping accommodations, fresh porters, and they had to make all the advance plans for crossing the rivers. When the boundary was eventually

reached some of these men operated heliographs at night, using carbide gas burners for light instead of the sunlight used for daytime signalling. The Red Shirts were constantly wet and doing the roughest kind of work, yet there was never a murmur of protest. They performed many duties, guarded the transport of valuable instruments and were entrusted with the carrying of many thousands of dollars in silver coins. Once they were in charge we never worried, everything was safe in their hands. It is no wonder if the engineers who were in charge become overenthusiastic about these men as they look back at those years.

The native African is generally scrupulously clean and is accustomed, whenever it is possible, to bathe twice a day. In some of the Mohammedan native towns there is the custom of giving a signal for bathing by horn or drum, but generally men, women and children bathe when they get up in the morning and again at night, when the day's work is over. The Red Shirts had never been spoiled by more civilized customs and kept themselves and their belongings immaculately clean. Whenever spare time permitted they were to be found polishing their buttons or washing their clothes. They were all picked men, strong, magnificently lithe and muscular; they carried themselves like soldiers, and in their clean

bright clothes made an appearance of which their officers were justly proud.

In the beginning the Boundary Survey had selected, by a process of weeding out, a few very intelligent tribesmen as messengers and guards. Gradually it was found that the men who stood highest in the "Devil Bush" were the most trustworthy and intelligent; such men were made "sergeants" and "corporals". Through them the recruits for the larger construction corps were obtained. No one could have been more severe and exacting than they were with the men under them, and certainly no one took more pride in the work accomplished.

The immense amount of splendid work accomplished by this organization, as well as the unique method by which it was trained and governed, is a splendid demonstration not only of the ability of the tribesman, but of the method that was used. I am convinced that if Africans are trained along lines that follow their own bush system of education, infinitely quicker and more satisfactory results can be obtained than by a cheap aping of Western methods. I consider this experiment to be one of the most interesting of the Government's accomplishments, and I suggest that it should be taken

into consideration by any who are studying African education and development.

Unfortunately for the Red Shirts, Liberia is in transition and with increasing prosperity a public works department has come into existence in which they have no place. The old close contact and personal element in the work had gone. One day the Red Shirts were ordered to turn in their uniforms. I am glad I was not there to see it. The new system was too new and too different for these men; their little world had tumbled down about them. They could neither understand nor was anyone interested enough to understand them. Men who had worked for months without pay to be at last admitted to the coveted dignity of a Red Shirt were no longer wanted. Some stayed a little while, but within a few months they drifted away. Today the Bush has swallowed them up and their former engineer chiefs are building roads in other lands.

CHAPTER XIII

COURT PALAVA

LIBERIA has been wise in setting up special courts for the administration of justice under native customary law. They are distinguished from their ordinary county, circuit, chancery and supreme courts where the endless litigation beloved of the civilized African is fought out on a system modelled after that of the United States. On the coast criminal cases are of course handled in the Liberian county courts, as the authority of the native courts is limited to petty offences and civil suits; but in the interior, more serious cases are tried before the native courts because the jurisdiction of the county courts does not extend beyond the boundaries of the counties. Back in the forest no one knows where county stops or district begins. Consequently there exists a legal no man's land where the process server is the terror of all. The petty justice, interested in his fees, tries to extend his jurisdiction far and wide; natives are hauled in for not having county licenses

or some other fineable offence. "The sporting ground of law suits", was the way one Secretary in his report aptly described this fee hunter's paradise.

Travellers interested in native affairs and the administration of justice on the West Coast have commented on the number and variety of the Liberian courts. There is no question that at first glance it would appear that half of the educated community is engaged in legal affairs, either as judges, solicitors, justices or officers of some court or other, and that proportionately more money is budgeted for courts than seems reasonable or necessary. But when consideration is given to the difficulties of interior travel, the long delays between ships, the utter impossibility of a coast road, the necessity of the dual system of native tribunals and "civilized" courts, it becomes more apparent that it is impossible—for the present at any rate—to reduce this expense.

If adequate means of communication existed, so that judges could travel readily from one district to another, a smaller number of judges would suffice with a consequent decrease of expense. From Monrovia to Cape Palmas it is nearly three hundred miles, but since there is no road along the coast, the visiting judge must travel by sea, and be absent from Monrovia for a period of three months. To visit

Sinoe, a smaller port at which steamers call less frequently than at Cape Palmas, a judge may be compelled to wait a month for a steamer to get there and consume three more weeks waiting for a return ship, although he may be able to discharge his court duties in a week. This demonstrable impossibility of a travelling judiciary makes necessary the appointment of a larger number of local judges and the maintenance of a greater number of local courts, with a corresponding increase in cost.

The fact that all testimony must be taken down in longhand adds to the difficulty and slows up the courts. Notwithstanding the obvious need of court stenographers the school authorities, for years, could not be induced to teach shorthand.

Natives have a peculiar method of getting at the truth of a case. In the first place, both the plaintiff and defendant have the right to tell all the facts that they consider have anything whatever to do with the history of the case in question. This means that testimony of a quarrel between two clans that may have started so far back as to have become lost in legend, is considered perfectly relevant and will be admitted in evidence in a case concerning a stolen cooking pot. In fact, the best description of what is evidence is to say that anything either side considers as evidence is evidence. Furthermore, each

side will call innumerable witnesses, whose testimony may be contradicted while it is being given, by statements of the opposing side or even by the spectators. To a foreigner unaccustomed to natives, a trial conducted under these conditions appears to be a perfect bedlam and to bring confusion on confusion; but experience proves otherwise. At trials in native communities the spectators usually know the facts or circumstances surrounding every case, and if a judge speaks the native language, he can get a very clear idea of the right or wrong of the affair and of the value of the witnesses' testimony. Perhaps more information comes to the surface in this native way than by adhering to the Western rules of limiting evidence. Very frequently the underlying motives can never be developed by the present Western system, but they are brought out to the last detail in a native court. A friend of mine, who is a judge in Nigeria and a barrister admitted to the London Bar, told me that after twenty years' experience he was convinced that the native court system was infinitely better for cases involving tribesmen. He cited some extraordinary cases in which the deciding testimony had been of a character that would have been ruled out in the trial of a similar case under Western procedure.

The French colonial courts, particularly in crimi-

nal cases, use a procedure that in many respects contains the same fundamental principles as the tribal courts. I am referring, of course, to the admission of evidence and the status of the accused. Their system is admirably suited to the temperament of the tribesmen, although it has the temporary defect of forcing them to speak French. This hardship, however, will not be lasting because the French African subjects are rapidly acquiring French, and the language barrier that prevails in other parts of Africa is being broken down wisely in this way in the French colonies.

Because of this almost unlimited admission of testimony, native cases occupy a great deal of time. The chiefs and commissioners who act as judges frequently sit during the trial of a case for days on end, from early morning until long after midnight, listening to the interminable stories of the witnesses.

The natives have no confidence whatever in the modern court system, and frequently misunderstand it in an amusing way. One of our men, who had reasons to believe he had been damaged by the loss of affection of one of his wives, decided he would bring suit against the responsible party in the "civilized" courts. When told that he must specify the amount of the damage, he claimed $30.00. Afterward he told me with much glee, "I go humbug dat

man plenty. I sue him thirty times for one dollar, and de court eat plenty cost every time. I got best and I goin' give dat man pepper."

In the interior under the native system it was usual in the old days, and in many places is still the custom, to hold the person who lost the decision as a prisoner, until the damages including costs had been fully paid. Under the clan system a man's clan is responsible for his liabilities. If the amounts were reasonable or the clan was in good standing, it did not take long to raise the necessary payments. But, where a clan was few in numbers or poor, or if the man haled before the chief was a stranger, often it was found that the chief would misuse his position by holding the man and making him work for him while waiting an indefinite time for release. Every administrator of native affairs soon learns that there is no one as relentless or brutal in his treatment of Africans as an African. In this way many chiefs managed to acquire a considerable number of free men who were held by them to all intents and purposes as slaves. While these men could always be redeemed, in theory at least, on payment of the money claimed, it was a bad system, and the supervision of district commissioners appointed by a modern government has in this and other ways relieved the tribesmen of the oppression of unscrupu-

lous chiefs. Today an appeal from a chief can always be taken to the district commissioner, and, if necessary, from him to the general government at the capital. This has removed one of the most common causes of tribal wars and raids.

It is obvious that commissioners have a great responsibility and that an unscrupulous official can do untold harm. Liberia has been unfortunate in some of her commissioners in the past, and difficulties with her tribal subjects have resulted from their illegal acts. Both in adjacent British and French territory there is a lack of population, and Liberian tribesmen are welcomed eagerly when they emigrate. The loss of population in the past and the fear of further emigration has caused the government to become increasingly watchful of the interior officials. It is only fair to record, however, that many Liberian commissioners have been painstaking and efficient, serving not only their government but going beyond the strict line of duty in aiding the tribesmen.

It is absolutely necessary in Liberia for judges to understand the native language or great unfairness results, because the interpreter, having no responsibility, frequently accepts presents from both sides and twists the evidence to suit the highest bidder. I believe it safe to say, that every foreign judge in

West Africa has received offers from numerous interpreters to serve without pay, so great was their alleged public spirit and sense of civic duty. I remember an American who found himself in the position of judge without knowing a word of the native language. He afterwards said that he had learned the truth of a particular case only after it was too late to undo the damage. In the course of the proceedings he had told the interpreter to question a chief, who was a witness for the defence, about a gift of ten pounds which had been referred to in the case. The sharp-witted and unscrupulous interpreter, knowing that the natives could understand the words, "ten pounds", turned to the chief and said, "The Commissioner says you lie, and you must pay me ten pounds for him tonight or he will put you in jail". The chief of course expostulated with the interpreter, who turned to the American and said, "Sir, I tell that man, you ask about them ten pounds, but he says I do not speak truly what you have said. I say he must tell you but he say 'No'." The American fell into the trap and answered with much heat, "Yes he must. Tell him to do it quick or I'll put him in jail". Enough of this could be understood to convince the chief and the natives present that the money must be raised. That night the interpreter pocketed the ten pounds paid

by a man who had nothing whatever to do with the case, excepting that he had been called as a witness. Had the interpreter in this case been a member of the tribe, his tribal oaths would have prevented this sort of unscrupulous practice; but the interpreters are usually half-educated coast natives without tribal obligations.

Perhaps the greatest hardship a West African native suffers is when he is punished by "civilized law" for an offence that is not in violation of the native code. I remember the case of a native from the interior, who killed his wife for unfaithfulness, as he had a right to do under his particular tribal law. He made no attempt to evade what he had done, but cheerfully admitted his responsibility. When he was told he was to be hanged, he accepted his fate with resignation in which it was perfectly evident that he considered his action had been correct; but without any understanding of why he should be put to death—unless that possibly he had killed her in the wrong place. His last words, when asked if he had anything to say, were, "I kill em good, goo'-bye".

The only thing an African really fears is a beating. This is the general method of punishment employed, not only in Liberia, but in every other country on the West Coast of Africa. It is thor-

oughly enjoyed by everyone except the victim, as even the fellow prisoners, who may themselves be due for a thrashing on the morrow, will take much pleasure in the spectacle and spend the rest of the day laughingly imitating the gestures and yells of the unfortunate who was beaten. The African tribesmen are unsympathetic, perhaps cruel, if judged by Western standards; but one must not get the idea that the African native is vicious or immoral, because he most certainly is not. Native girls, and women missionaries, have travelled unescorted though all parts of the interior without the slightest molestation. Under native law, a crime against one of them would have been punished in the old days by death, that was inflicted first by beating the culprit until he was unconscious and then burning him alive. It is only in "civilized" communities that one ever hears of rape.

Natives in jail do not suffer any feeling of shame or chagrin. I remember a new British consul who nearly exploded with rage at the affectionate greeting some of his boys gave him while they were working in a chain gang. It never entered their minds to be ashamed of their position or to expect other than a cordial greeting. There is always much laughter and exchange of news around every native jail, and if they are well fed and not abused the

lower types of natives on the Coast have no objection to being put in prison. In this attitude lies one of the interesting differences between the African and Western point of view. When a native admits his mistake and receives punishment, he and his friends consider the matter closed, and the debt paid. The idea of any permanent disgrace never enters an African's head, nor can he understand why anyone else should hold it against him. He emerges from his punishment with the expectation of being received back into exactly the same status with his friends, family, and society that he occupied before he got into difficulty.

The Liberian citizen takes pride in the ownership of property, and no young Liberian considers himself to have entered manhood until he owns a building lot, and has at least started to build a modern type of wooden or concrete house. This custom in Liberia has puzzled many a visitor, because in the larger Liberian towns one often sees buildings in all stages of construction, but on which there is apparently no further work being done. This is because these young men build piecemeal. Whenever they manage to save a few dollars, their house construction enters on a new lease of life and activity until the savings are exhausted. It may take five or ten years to get a house completed in this way, but

as the bank or banking agencies in Liberia have never encouraged thrift by savings, the only form of investment open to Liberian youth is to put their money into a house or farm.

Every Liberian citizen has a right to receive, as a free grant from the government, a piece of public land, which he must pay taxes on thereafter, and in this way it has come about that most of the land near the coast is owned by Liberian citizens, whose forefathers received it as grants many years ago. The present land grants are being made on land farther back from the coast. The new motor roads therefore are proving a blessing to the young owners of these potential farms, and along these roads are now seen new houses, new clearings and the beginnings of new rubber or cocoa plantations. The stumbling block to rapid development is want of capital.

As the old families died off or became impoverished through the failure of the sugar industry, many of the plantations and farms along the coast have become united under one owner, so that it is not infrequent to meet a Liberian who owns many hundreds of acres of potentially valuable land now unproductive for want of capital.

Here we come upon one of the curiosities of Liberia which has hindered development on the one hand, but most certainly protected the Liberian on

the other: Under Liberian law, no white man or person not of negro blood can own real property within the Republic. Land may be leased, but not in perpetuity, and usually not for over forty years. This legal provision has prevented Liberian citizens from selling in time of stress all of their wharfage and valuable town sites to foreign business interests. Likewise, it has prevented them from selling their farms. At the same time this legal condition has made it impossible for a foreigner to seize for debt or to buy in, to protect a claim, any real property in Liberia. Thus real property cannot be used as security for the investment of foreign money. Liberian capital is limited, and lack of government credit has prevented the establishment heretofore of a national bank for the granting of farm loans.

In Liberia, today, the want of capital is acute. But until security can be assured to foreign capital, there is little prospect of improved conditions. This security might well be given by a provision of law permitting a foreign creditor to buy in at public sale property which has been seized for debt. Such a sale need not transfer permanent title, but it should give the foreign purchaser the right to occupy and use the property for a term of years. Further, court procedure must be speeded up before much effect can be expected, for no creditor would wish to

await the seemingly endless delay of civil suits under present conditions. Until such legislation is enacted no foreign bank can take part in the normal business development of the country, as is customary in other lands, by granting loans, for after all, the basis of wealth is land. It is to be expected that necessity will ultimately compel Liberia to seek out a plan to overcome these obstacles conformable to the protection of its citizens.

As I have explained in one of the preceding chapters, Liberian law has been accumulating under the pressure of circumstances rather than by a considered plan, and while this may be true of most statutory law in the world, I believe Liberia shows more particular or case legislation, as distinguished from general statutes, than will be found in any other country of its size.

As there is no general corporation act, every corporation is created by a special act of the Legislature. There is no general banking act, therefore the bank and its agencies carry on under British banking rules and English common law interpretation of contracts.

As there is no law covering negotiable paper, the banking interests in Liberia discourage the use of checks. It is only within the last two years that the government has paid its employees with checks

transferable by endorsement. Until 1924 there was no general mining act, nor any rivers and harbours navigation act; it was not until two years ago that motor vehicle legislation was enacted.

This lack of necessary statute law should not be considered as a reflection on the ability of the members of the Liberian Bar. As a matter of fact, there are many practising attorneys in Liberia who could give a good account of themselves in any part of the world; but the reason is, that in Liberia, as in other parts of West Africa, the educated and able Africans are so few in number that they are literally swamped by the burden of current work. In the struggle for existence there has not been the leisure or time for creative work, the comparative study of modern methods and the preparation of adequate legislation.

CHAPTER XIV

CUT BUSH—MAKE FARM

The West African rain forest is green and brown in colour. Excepting in the low swamp lands, it is never an impenetrable mass like the jungles of the West Indies or Central America. Much of Liberia is now covered with secondary growth as the natives have cut and burned the trees for many generations.

The West African bush was a disappointment to me because it has so little colour. The blooms of the orchid plants that cling to the larger trees are so inconspicuous that their beauty can only be appreciated under a magnifying glass. There are, of course, a few lovely jungle flowers, but they are hidden under the mass of monotonous greenish-brown vegetation. One must seek in other tropic lands for the gorgeous torch of the flamboyant, which turns a whole mountainside into flame, for trees festooned with mammoth purple orchids and rocky cliffs carpeted with masses of blue flowers.

Liberia offers only a picture of grey sea, brown rivers, dull green leaves and a steel grey sky. In the

In some places the tribesmen have constructed suspension bridges.

It was the duty of the Red Shirts to watch the porters—and to go ahead to the towns to advise the chiefs of the need of rations, sleeping accommodations and fresh porters.

A palava house in which native courts are held.

The women must plant the seeds.

dry season the roadsides are covered with reddish dust, while over all drifts the brown haze of the Harmattan. From June to December, the roads turn to mud, the brown rivers flood the lowlands, great patches of green mould creep up the sides of the whitewashed houses; and the grey lowering skies reach down to cover the earth with their endless veils of rain.

For all his love of colour and design, which the tribesman expresses in cloth, leather and beadwork, native villages are without flowers. Often, they are without shade trees. There is never a flower to brighten and soften the little brown huts or narrow village streets—not even a spear of grass. Perhaps the idea of a planted flower garden is too new to have taken hold, or else the village rule of clean bare earth between the huts has barred out blossoms. Yet some native boys when employed as gardeners enjoy flowers and will bestow great care on them. I had one who used to spend hours gathering and arranging flowers so that the rooms and verandas were always gay with their fresh bright colours. These were hibiscus, frangipani, baby's breath, butterfly bush, coral tree, Belgian lilacs, roses, purple bougainvillæa, white spider lilies, giant red lilies, and lantana. Sometimes he had to fill out with the many-coloured leaves of the croton or the little wild

red canna; but he never failed to keep the baskets and vases filled.

Many of these garden flowers were brought out by the early settlers; others have been carried along the Coast from the English and French colonies. In the towns of the Liberian citizens there are flower gardens or at least a few blooming plants near each house, while many of the mission stations are almost buried under fragrant masses of frangipani or the beautiful purple bougainvillæa.

In the moist warm soil and soft air everything grows. A tree pulled up by the roots and planted upside down will grow new roots at the other end, and new leaves where the roots were before. Unless the bark is removed from green logs that are used as fence posts, every post will grow, and a slip of a rubber tree when bent like a bow so that both ends can be stuck in the ground, immediately grows roots at both ends. From this it would appear that one only has to plant to get results in Liberia; but agriculture is more difficult than in temperate lands; not only because the crops are essentially different, but because the climatic conditions and the difference in seasons bring up problems which as yet have not been scientifically studied. In the first place, in West Africa the problem of weeds is enormous. There is an old saying in the tropical lands of Central Amer-

ica that "when the plough comes in, the profits go out". This means that land not sufficiently fertile to grow a crop without ploughing will, when cultivated, be covered by ever-sprouting weeds whose growth is as quick as that of the seeded crop. Consequently, it is customary to cut and burn over lands to be planted; then to sow the seed by digging a little hole for each seed, leaving to the weed seeds the hardened burned over surface. This results in giving the planted crop a good start over the weeds which, to some extent, are choked out in this way; but the tropical farmers' problem is not always settled so easily. The only rest the land ever gets is during the dry season when vegetation rests for lack of moisture.

In Liberia this dry season lasts about three months, but deeply rooted plants still find enough moisture under the surface to make some growth notwithstanding the lack of rain. It is during this dry time that the cutting, burning and planting must be done so as to take advantage of the beginning of the rains to sprout the seeds. The long period of dampness and heavy rain that follows the three months of the dry season is sometimes broken in August by two or three weeks which are called the "middle drys". This second dry period gives an opportunity for maturing two crops a year.

The growth of fungus, the spread of disease and the storing of crops in the long damp period are very serious problems. On the other hand, rice culture is benefited, as it is unnecessary to make rice paddies or flood the growing crop because the constant rains give sufficient moisture without any artificial inundation. Liberia produces cocoa, yams, cassava, cotton, coffee, rubber, the oil palm and coarse strong tobacco; eventually it will produce enough sugar for home use, although at the present time most of the cane grown is made into rum. The variety now known as St. Paul River Lightning would make an American bootlegger sick with envy.

On the native rice farms there are ingenious systems for scaring away birds. Little platforms, covered with a thatched roof, are erected on posts six or eight feet high, and here children are stationed with sling shots to stone away birds. Sometimes a network of string and cords is spread over the entire field, with pull-strings centred at the platform. A tug on the string leading out to the place where birds have settled will disturb and scare them away. When the rice comes into head, it has to be watched all day long in this way, or the crop would be eaten by birds and animals.

After the rice has ripened the heads are pulled and the rice carried to the native villages. Here it is

stored under the roofs of the huts, and the smoke from the fires which are always maintained in the houses and rice kitchens, drys and cures it. It is hulled by being beaten. After the grains have been separated from the chaff they are mixed with small dried red peppers, to keep out insects, and put back under the roofs where the heat from the fires keeps away dampness. In buying native rice in large quantities, peppered rice is always more desirable because in a dry place it will keep for many months without being attacked by insects.

In tropical countries Indian corn is usually preserved in much the same way. The little corn that is grown in Liberia must always be taken from the cob in order to keep it for any period. Every tropical farmer must be constantly on guard against damp and the attacks of ordinary animals and insects. If, in the tropics, corn is left on the cob or in the husk, as is the custom in America and Europe, there literally would not be a grain left to pay the farmer for his labour.

The rubber plantations in Liberia are composed of trees of the variety known as *Hevea brasiliensis*. This is a tree indigenous to Brazil that has also been cultivated by all of the great plantations in the Far East, and produces the majority of the rubber used by the world for automobile tires and other articles

manufactured of rubber. I have been informed by rubber experts that in the Far East—possibly because the greater heat and humidity there cause a more or less constant vapour bath—the trees are softer and weaker in resistance to disease and insect attack than the ones in Liberia, which are sturdier and more like the original stock grown in Brazil. Be that as it may, a rubber plantation in Liberia, which had been forced out of active production by the decrease in market prices after the World War and by the prohibitive export tax which then existed, stood without care for eight or ten years, and when examined by foreign experts was found to have sustained astonishingly little damage from insect attack or disease.

The production of rubber requires but little special skill. It is work that naturally appeals to the West African, and for which he is inherently fitted. The latex, as the juice is called from which rubber is made, is a fluid that turns milky white on contact with the air. It is found between the outer bark and the green inner skin of the tree. It is not the ordinary sap of the tree that in other varieties of trees is found in the inner skin. No one seems to know the exact function of the latex in a rubber tree or in other trees in which a similar second sap or like condition exists. The latex is collected by cutting a

V-shaped groove extending around the tree as measured between the outspread sides of the V, to about one-third of the circumference of the tree. The cut is made in this form so as to reach just through the outer bark, but care must be taken not to cut the inner bark or skin as this would injure the tree. The juice or latex runs down the two wings of the V-shaped cut to the bottom point where it is collected in a little porcelain cup that is fastened to a small spout driven into the bark. As the latex soon coagulates in the air and ceases to flow, each tree must have the lower side of the V-shaped groove recut every day, and then some hours later natives carefully empty the collected juice from the white porcelain cups into large tins.

Each tree is numbered, and each native is assigned a certain number of trees as his daily stint. The fluid so collected is carried by the men to a central point and dumped into tanks where coagulation of the rubber content is produced by putting acid in the tanks of latex. When this is accomplished the water is drawn off. The pure rubber which is left is then smoked for protection against damp and mildew in shipment. There are three ways of preparing rubber for shipment, two of which are used in Liberia.

In the first method, the rubber is rolled out into thin strips called crêpe and smoked over a wood fire. The second method is to form it into slabs three or four inches thick, so that it can be conveniently handled, and smoke it in this form. There is an advantage to this if it can be quickly used; but thick rubber slabs will not keep as well in storage as the thin crêpe rubber; therefore on the open market the crêpe sheets are preferred to the slabs. Plantations shipping direct to a manufacturing plant find the slabs offer some economy as less curing is necessary to a given weight of rubber.

The third process is the same as is used in the preparation of powdered milk. In this method the water content is removed by forcing the fresh latex, in the form of a fine spray, into a superheated drum. Under the heat the water turns to vapour, and the minute particles of rubber collect at the bottom. This system has never been employed in West Africa because it involves some difficulty of storage, which is not encountered in the other two methods of smoke curing.

The cutting of the trees continues until the V-shaped removal of bark has reached a point near the ground that makes further work impossible. Then a new V is started on the next third part of the circumference, at the same height as the first cut.

The village rule of clean bare earth between the huts.

On the native rice farms there is an ingenious system for scaring away birds.

A plantation of young rubber trees.

Bungalows of American employees on a Liberian rubber plantation.

Daily tapping or cutting is continued until this section is exhausted. The third section of the tree will be tapped in the same manner. Theoretically the bark should be regrown over the first section by the time the tapping of the third section is finished. It is this ability of renewing the bark over the cut sections that has made this particular variety the most valuable rubber-producing plant known.

In the production of Guayule rubber the entire bush must be macerated to get at the rubber content. Therefore it is necessary to replant Guayule plantations after the harvest of each crop. The extra labour, special machinery, and small rubber content has made Guayule rubber expensive as compared with tree rubber, and although Guayule rubber can be grown in America, it is doubtful if it will ever be a successful competitor of the *Hevea brasiliensis*.

The real skill and ability in rubber production lies in the administrative capacity of the plantation manager; because in handling a product where the percentage of profit is comparatively low, the nice balance between profit and loss depends entirely on the smooth running of the organization. Constant supervision is necessary to guard against carelessness and injury to the trees on the part of the tappers. One of the great difficulties of the rubber planter is to keep rain water from running into the

porcelain bowls that catch the latex as it comes from the tree. Simple as it seems, no one has yet devised an inexpensive shield, which, fastened to the tree, would turn the rain water that drains down the trunk.

Even in so far distant a place as a Liberian rubber plantation, an English woman is successfully acting as assistant manager. She and her husband divide the supervision of this plantation, and her success in handling Liberian tribesmen speaks as well for her ability as it does for the good qualities of the tribesmen themselves.

I was much interested in the way this couple keep themselves in touch with the home life of England. Newspapers arrive about once in two weeks, but each morning they open the daily paper of two weeks back, and in this way they have a new paper every morning. They never look at or unwrap the papers in advance of this order. Both of them are keenly interested in sport. They keep a betting book and play the races against each other, maintaining almost as much interest and delight in the results as if they were in the paddock at home.

Life on a big rubber plantation in Liberia is really as healthful and pleasant a way of earning a living as can be found. It is always cool and airy in the shadow of the big trees and visits from other plant-

ers or occasional trips to town make pleasant if simple diversions to avoid monotony. When the rubber trees are in bloom the little flowers have a sweet spicy fragrance that penetrates all through the plantation. Rubber trees drop their leaves in the dry season, and on a cool day at the time of leaf-dropping it is not hard to imagine one's self back in a beech forest in a far-off northern land.

A particular variety of Liberian coffee is indigenous to Liberia, although this tree, *Caffea liberiensis,* is now grown in Madagascar and the Federated Malay States, as well as in some other parts of the coffee-producing world. It is a particularly valuable type of coffee as the large bean gives a quick strong infusion that is in demand for after dinner coffee. Although this coffee has been grown on the plantations in Liberia since the days of the early colonists, the cultivation and preparation of the berry is still conducted by primitive methods. The trees are rarely trimmed in a scientific way, which would develop the berry to the best advantage, nor is much attention given to the proper shading of the trees. They are more apt to utilize for shade the weeds and scrub growth which are consuming the nourishment required by the coffee trees. Yet, under all these adverse conditions, Liberian coffee trees pro-

duce comparatively heavy crops, and once a taste for its delightful flavour is acquired, this coffee will be preferred to any other.

When the ripe berries are ready for picking, they are collected and spread out on hard, beaten earthen floors to dry in the sun. They are constantly turned over as a protection against dampness or a possible shower, which, in some parts of the country, occurs even in the dry season. When the berries are quite dry, whatever remains of the pulp is picked and beaten from the beans by hand. This cumbersome process of drying the berry and picking the bean by hand is expensive. It is also impossible to get a perfectly clean, polished product in this way; worse still, the bean is frequently broken. But despite the fact that the Liberian product, for these reasons, does not compare in looks with other coffee, the entire crop is always sold without difficulty for good prices. In the northern part of Europe, especially in those countries where of necessity snow water is used, an infusion made from the strong, aromatic Liberian coffee is greatly valued because of its agreeable flavour. The market would absorb a much greater quantity if the Liberian plantations would produce it. In the last year the Government has purchased for the benefit of the planters in the St. Paul River district a modern plant for the clean-

ing, polishing and grading of coffee, and there is no doubt that as modern plants are installed in other districts, Liberian coffee will become an increasingly important export.

One of the products for which Liberia is noted is piassava fibre, the production of which is entirely in the hands of the tribesmen. This is extracted from the fronds of a palm which grows along the rivers. The long, round rattan-like fibres are valued in foreign countries as the most durable material for street-cleaning brushes and similar articles.

At the present time, very little oil from the wild oil palm is shipped from Liberia, as foreign plantation palm oil commands the world market. Further, the increasing home consumption of palm oil for food purposes has left but little surplus for export. Very much more oil could be produced if there were any inducement for the tribesmen to make it. Cracking palm nuts to get at the oily kernel is hard, slow work, and palm oil is bulky and difficult for the native to transport. The palm kernels are still more bulky and hard to handle. No native will go to all that work, then walk for a week carrying on his head fifty pounds of kernels or oil, for the small price offered. When traders open stations in the oil palm districts, and auto trucks provide reasonably cheap transport, Liberian palm oil production will increase

greatly. It is an ideal place for the oil palm, and great benefit will result if the industry is taken up and fostered.

The Gold Coast of West Africa has of late years become the centre of the cocoa industry of the world. The story of cocoa production there is an example of intelligent administration that well deserves remark. The Gold Coast Government sought to introduce production of cocoa as a means of changing the economic status of the tribesmen by tying them to their farms. The cutting and burning of wild bush, characteristic of the semi-nomadic type of farming which I have described, was prohibited, and this has turned the nomad into a permanent farmer on a fixed farm. Encouraged in every way by the British Government they took easily to the new industry, and today Gold Coast cocoa, produced on the small farms run by native families, dominates world production to such an extent that buyers from all parts of the world journey to the Gold Coast.

As was expected, the product in the beginning was of a medium grade; but Government supervision has impressed on the native the necessity of improving the quality if he expects to receive the top price, and a constant betterment is being remarked in Gold Coast cocoa year by year.

In the market news of a New York paper today, it was stated that a cable from the United States Trade Commissioner on the Gold Coast reporting the probable crop increase this year, caused a serious drop in cocoa futures on the New York exchange. Only a few years ago cocoa was unknown on the Coast.

Liberia never was a cocoa producing country, although the soil, climate and other natural conditions are as well adapted to it as the Gold Coast. Many Liberian tribesmen in past years went to the Gold Coast for employment, and in this way became acquainted with cocoa culture. When they returned to their homes they brought back the seeds and tales of easy money which inspired their friends. The result is that today in the south-eastern part of Liberia there is the beginning of a similar cocoa industry, although it has been brought about entirely by the tribesmen. If this development is fostered by intelligent governmental assistance, it will assume considerable importance, not only because it will increase the value of Liberian exports, but by reason of its influence on tribal economic conditions, it will aid in bringing about fixed farming and family independence. If the natives can be turned into farmers, owning and working small farms, they will of necessity turn from the old clan communal owner-

ship system to something more nearly approaching modern ideas of property and self reliance. Such a change will bring these people a long step nearer citizenship in a democracy.

Economically Liberia has alway suffered from the one crop system. In the beginning the citizens relied on sugar. When that failed they were ruined. In later years coffee supported the north-western part of the country, while fibre and the export of labour served to support the lower coast. If coffee failed, one half the country patiently awaited the "next year". If fibre could not be sold, purchasing power dropped on the Coast. The national debt of the Republic is small and if necessary they can and have relied on local food production, consequently crop failure is not the extensive calamity it is in some other places. Nevertheless, financial progress has been deplorably slow; partly because of putting all their eggs in one basket. Rubber, which is now coming into production, will be of help, and the opening of the interior to foreign trade, coupled with maintenance of the roads, also will assist in the breaking up of this one-crop bondage.

Primarily Liberia needs to install a considered plan of agricultural development that is based on sound economic principles, fostered and developed

through rural agricultural agencies in the hands of experts. Her future is in agriculture, especially in the small farm. No permanent economic safety can be hoped for from any other course.

CHAPTER XV

PALM OIL RUFFIANS

In the good old days on the West Coast of Africa trade was conducted in a more picturesque manner than it is today. In the first place, there was no involved task of modern cost and stock accounting. A shipload of goods was deposited on the beach with a trader in charge, and its value marked against that man on the books at home. Eventually he disposed of these goods by barter, and in their place accumulated the raw products of the Coast such as gums, fibre, ivory, oils, valuable dye and hard woods. When opportunity offered, this stuff was sent home for sale, and more goods sent out. It was an unusual thing for a man to go home on leave. If the trader lived, in five or ten years he had accumulated a comfortable fortune. If he did not survive, his family benefitted. This was the beginning of the West African trade, and from it has grown the only successful system in use today. The greatest companies on the Coast have maintained their agencies and

warehouses, "factories" as they are called, for many years; their names are known and respected by the natives for miles back in the interior and along thousands of miles of coast. I once had the pleasure of seeing the log of a trading ship sent to West Africa by the firm of Woermann over a hundred years ago. The character of merchandise sent out and the cargo brought back varied very little from the trade-goods of today.

As the first factories on the Coast became permanent and regular trade routes were established, the European staff was increased. Sub-factories spread up the rivers and small steamers or barges took the place on the larger rivers of the old dug-out canoes. Even so, the factor or chief agent had entire charge and ruled his domain like a petty king. To him was charged the value of the trade-goods of his district. He paid all expenses and sent back the goods his district had collected. Very frequently his principals at home shared the profits with him on an equal basis. There was never a checking of inventories or settlement of accounts at regular intervals; sometimes no comprehensive settlement was made until the agent was ready to leave the Coast for good and turn over to a new factor. The amount of trust and confidence which the European firms placed in their West Coast agents would surprise modern firms

with their endless audits, inspections and detailed accounting. But in the old days those traders went pretty much on the square, and their enormous profits would be regarded by the modern merchant as a fairy tale.

Around each factory there grew up a little detribalized colony of half-castes, to whom that factory represented all they knew of government and wealth. Its success was their success and its property was guarded as a family affair. Those were the days of the "palm oil ruffians," and the tales of the administration of these factories by factors whose word was law, and who were the absolute dictators of entire districts, read like stories of the Conquistadores. Their profits rivalled the plunder of the gentlemen adventurers who sailed the Spanish Main.

The great old names still exist and the tales of some of the great factors have not been forgotten in the new ways that have come to the Coast.

Today, competition has destroyed profits, and regular mails, cables and wireless have brought the factories under the constant control of the main office at home. Quotations on West Coast products are regularly cabled and buying prices change accordingly. Nevertheless, the old system of barter still continues. It was only just before the World War that the German authorities in the Cameroons

first instituted the system of paying for purchases from natives with silver money. The custom has now spread to the larger cities along the Coast, but in the sleepy little towns where freight ships call but once a month, where no banking facilities exist, and in much of the interior, barter is still the recognized method of business. Practically no foreign firm can hope to succeed profitably which does not export as well as import, as profits must be made both ways today in order to compete.

The old firms still have the advantage over the newcomers because of their long association with the chiefs and tribesmen. In many cases these are real friendships which have continued through generations. These older traders not only know the natives and their tribal traditions, but appreciate all their little vagaries. This knowledge is of infinite value where an extension of credit must be made on a crop to secure it against a competitor's bid. Further, these older firms have the advantage of knowing all the little idiosyncrasies of native taste, which is caught by design and colour, as well as quality. The market for cloth of special colours and design varies year by year just as fashions change in more civilized countries, and unless a new trader is lucky, a cloth that does not please the native's fancy will probably remain on the shelf, while the European

cloth in the older stores, made that year for the Coast taste, will be sold as quickly as it is unrolled. Trade has been built up by these long established factories along special lines that cater to the native likes and demands. For instance, he is accustomed to gin in bottles of a certain shape, and he likes his tobacco in heads. He also expects iron bars to be of a certain weight and size. He still uses flintlock guns, where guns are permitted, and as restrictions have been drawn closer about the sale of cartridges, an increased value has been put on the muzzle-loading gun, because many natives of the interior know how to make powder, and most anything will do for lead.

As only a few natives can read, the usual methods of publicity are useless, but certain long established labels and designs have come to represent to the native mind a particular quality and kind of article. The native clings to these things.

Perhaps some of these reasons explain why there are so few American houses doing business on the West Coast. It is but lately that any American representative has been placed on the Gold Coast or in Nigeria, notwithstanding the Gold Coast is the greatest cocoa producing country in the world, and that Nigeria, with some twenty-one millions of

people, has long been one of the most profitable trade centres for British exports.

When a trader could reasonably expect to secure a fortune in only a few years on the Coast, young men were eager to go out for service in the small factories, until, by promotion to the main factory, they could stand in the way of receiving their competence; but since the World War salaries have decreased. At present they are at a point not very much higher than the amounts nominally paid for similar work at home, and as living costs are considerably higher on the Coast, there is really no financial inducement for young men to go out unless the employer provides living quarters and an employees' mess. Certainly there is no social inducement and the constant precautions necessary to preserve one's health indicate a somewhat higher risk in that direction. All these things considered, there has grown up a great demand for educated trustworthy African clerks and sub-agents, but as I have explained in another chapter, education has lagged behind so woefully on the Coast that there are fifty places for each individual capable of filling one of them.

The demand for cheaper ways of retailing to the native has been to some extent satisfied from an unexpected direction: After the World War Syrian

subjects of France worked their way down the West Coast, first establishing themselves in the larger cities and then working up country. Today many Syrians will be found along the entire Coast, usually living in little shacks or native huts and displaying a stock of bright cloths, salt, tobacco, gin where permitted, and cheap wares generally known as trade-goods. They usually start by buying for cash from one of the big factories. As business increases, they bring in friends and relatives, and throw out a line of little shops along the travelled roads and thickly settled native districts. In the last five years they have become the middlemen between the factories and the natives, taking the place, to a very great extent, of the old sub-factories.

In railroad work and in the building of harbours or the clearing of great plantations, the Syrian is acting as a small labour contractor. He can live on the food products of the country, and he has a considerable immunity to both sun and fever. While from another point of view he is also particularly suited to the Coast as he has little or no colour prejudice, but mingles freely and intimately with the natives. His racial position for this reason is not clear to the natives and reminds me of an amusing story.

One day a Kru headman from an incoming

steamer was asked how many passengers had been brought up the Coast. He answered, "Massah, dey be five white men, seven black men, and three Assyrians".

Any picture of West Coast trade must necessarily be viewed as a phase in a changing condition. What was true yesterday does not hold today, and today's system will be changed tomorrow. There is probably no part of the world where development is taking place more rapidly than in West Africa. African troops sent abroad in the World War; the pacification of the Coast from Dakar to the Congo; the means of travelling from place to place; the beginnings of education reaching the tribesmen; all these and many other influences have contributed to destroy the old fixed conditions of trade. In this connection the way Nigerian Haussas have taken to travelling along the Coast peddling Nigerian country cloths, carved ivory, brasswork such as Calabar bowls and plaques and the beautiful leather work which in America we call Morocco, has distributed such products for thousands of miles, while from the other end of the Coast, Marocains have penetrated eastward and southward and are becoming a pest and a nuisance. They are money lenders who manage in devious ways to establish themselves among the Coast natives. By ways that are as clever

as they are unscrupulous, they get the natives into their toils and manage systematically to extract one to two hundred per cent on their advances. As these usurers work entirely among the natives and seldom resort to the Government Law Courts, they manage to evade the laws which have been established for the protection of the tribesmen and prosper exceedingly.

Not only the various governments, but the people of West Africa have experienced labour trouble. Either because the tribesmen could not market their produce, or by reason of a greater density of population, Liberia always viewed the labour question from a position opposite to the other countries in West Africa, for while other parts of the Coast suffer from a scarcity of labour, Liberia has suffered from unemployment.

There never has been a census taken in Liberia and I doubt if there ever has been an accurate census in territories to the south and to the north. Nevertheless, in French territory adjacent to Liberia, the official figures give fifteen inhabitants to the square mile. In Liberia many huts are built within the confines of Devil Bushes where no assessor would dare venture, and many natives, to avoid taxation, have built their huts far off the roads in the thick forest where it is difficult or impossible to find them. Notwithstanding this, Liberian hut tax paid at the

rate of one dollar a hut per annum, amounts to approximately two hundred thousand dollars. At least five people live in the average hut, but generally there are more. On this basis Liberia would have considerably more than a million tribesmen in her population. To these must be added the civilized or detribalized natives, who live in houses as distinguished from huts, and the Liberian citizens in the towns and on their farms. It appears logical, therefore, to estimate the Liberian population at a minimum of a million and a quarter people.

I have already mentioned the Kru tribe as a people who have become specialized to a seafaring life. Practically this entire tribe works in and about the sea and ships. Captains of steamers usually have one or two Kru headmen who regularly work their ships. Each ship's headman has under him a group of winchmen, boatmen, labourers and others who form his gang of from fifty to seventy men. Several days before the ship arrives a cable will be sent to the shipping agency or directly to the headman, telling him the date of arrival and the number of men required. The headman rounds up his gang and the shipping agent has the whole outfit vaccinated against smallpox. When the ship comes in port these men go aboard and from that time until the ship again returns to port, they take over the run-

ning of the winches, the discharge and the loading of cargo. A freighter stopping at the ports to discharge cargo on her way south, and stopping again at each port to pick up cargo on her way north, usually makes Nigeria, the Congo or Portuguese Angola the end of the run; different lines turning back at these points. A crew of deck labour from Monrovia will be absent for a period of from one to three months on each trip, depending on the number of ports and the length of the voyage down the Coast.

The French boats take their labour from Tabu on the Ivory Coast. The British and American boats take part of their labour from Monrovia and the balance from Freetown, Sierra Leone. Freetown deck labour is mostly composed of Liberian Krus who have established a "Kru town" or Kru village at Freetown. Much of the labour taken on at Tabu by the French boats is Liberian, for the natives cross the Cavally River and walk to Tabu in order to get work there. The German, Dutch, Spanish, and Danish ships take their labour at Monrovia or Cape Palmas. The government charges a tax for this labour, which is paid by the men themselves, and, in addition, there are other charges made by the municipalities, by the doctors for medical examination and for vaccination. The general government's

charge amounts to one dollar per head; until the last three or four years the annual revenue received from this source averaged twenty thousand dollars.

It is in the ships' labour business that the interesting mixture of tribal and modern systems shows best. When the men are paid each man receives his money individually from the agent of the shipping company. Then the men carry it to the chief for division according to the tribal system. The chief takes a percentage of each labourer's earnings, after that the headman gets a percentage as a reward for employing him, and finally, the man's family clan divide up what they consider is their share, leaving the labourer a very small proportion of his earnings for himself. That the tribesmen are perfectly satisfied with these conditions perhaps best illustrates the great difference in their concept of property.

In Fernando Po and across on the mainland of Spanish Guinea, Spanish planters have many farms and plantations, but the island of Fernando Po has few, if any, native labourers of its own. On the Guinea mainland there are plenty of natives, but the Spanish developments are confined to the coast, and the native tribesmen are unwilling to pass through tribal districts between their own and the coast settlements. Under these conditions it has been the custom for many years to recruit labour in Liberia

for the plantations in these places. These labourers work for one or two years before returning. The whole arrangement is regulated by an agreement between the two governments which provides, among other things, that the men shall receive only half of their pay while away, and that the balance shall be paid them in a lump sum when they return. The workers are provided with return transportation at the end of their period of service. In the past this has worked out to the benefit of both countries, as it provided for a considerable number of the unemployed and trained them in agriculture, while, at the same time it brought a substantial amount of capital into Liberia. Under usual conditions, as understood by the West, this would have permitted each man to have set himself up as a small agriculturist when he returned home. In actual practice, because of the clan system, the money received by a man on his return benefitted his relations more than himself. One of the purposes of the original plan has not been accomplished, for it has had but little effect towards starting the native out as an individual farmer.

A somewhat similar custom of recruiting labour has been in effect for the plantations and mines of British colonies, particularly for those of the Gold Coast. It was from the Gold Coast that Liberian

labourers brought back the inspiration for the planting and development of cocoa which I have mentioned in another place.

As one can readily see, Liberia long has had a serious problem in finding employment for her people. The lack of capital, of markets and of transportation, has forced her population to go out of the country. It is surprising how far afield some of the tribesmen have wandered. Frequently a man will mention working in Europe or on the Panama Canal. It is only now that any opportunity is offered such men to use at home the knowledge they have acquired; previously Liberia had no need of skilled labourers.

One day an American engineer was making a street survey and as usual a little crowd gathered to watch. One tribesman clad in an old ragged country cloth and without a hat stepped up and said, "I 'member you, massah. I see you Panama. You was engineer". "Right you are", said the American, well pleased, "I was there". "Yes", said the African, finishing his sentence, "Yes, you was engineer on a steam shovel". Our friend never has lived down that story.

In the last few years the number of tribesmen leaving the country to seek agricultural work has decreased steadily. This has caused a serious short-

age of labour in the Spanish colonies and some difficulty in other places. But that these workers are finding sufficient opportunity at home is most satisfactory evidence of economic progress in Liberia.

CHAPTER XVI

WHITE MAN

TROPICAL living conditions and those special customs which are peculiar to the Coast have to be studied if the new foreign resident desires to be comfortable. Even more important are the precautions necessary for health.

Tennis, golf, swimming or tramping will help more than medicine to maintain nerves and body. Unfortunately the first three are not always possible. However, it is the unaccustomed precautions necessary in West Africa that the new foreign resident finds most irksome.

Most foreigners in Liberia and many of the Liberian citizens find it necessary to sleep under mosquito nets, not only as a protection from infection through the bite of the mosquito, but also to prevent the more painful though comparatively harmless bites of sand flies. These latter are so small that they pass through the holes of the usual mosquito net mesh, but the octagonal, smaller mesh procurable

from West African outfitters in Europe gives complete protection.

There is no doubt that copper screening of the houses will come in the future, but at the present time very few houses are screened.

One of the great difficulties of the tropics is drinking water. Not only is there danger of such infections as dysentery and typhoid, but many small eggs, larvæ of worms and similar parasites exist in the water of the streams, springs and wells. The only precaution that will assure safety, unless one drinks bottled water from Europe, is to boil all drinking water for half an hour. The water must not be merely heated, it must be brought to a full boil for that length of time. Boiled water has a flat, disagreeable taste and contains dead insect matter and dirt. The most satisfactory way of making the water clean and palatable is to put it through a Berkefeld filter. In this type of filter the candles are removable and can be scrubbed from time to time to clean off the collected deposit. Also as the water drips through the candle drop by drop it is aerated again and the unpalatable taste of boiled water is removed. It is a good thing to put the water in the filter while it is boiling hot, for any mosquito larvæ which may have been deposited in the filter by house mosquitoes will be killed. Men engaged in scientifically

studying the yellow fever mosquito say that the larvæ are clever enough to hide themselves in the spout of a filter, at the first movement of the lid, which allows the light to give them warning.

If one cannot get filtered or bottled water when travelling, I have always found the water of a green cocoanut to be a perfectly satisfactory substitute. The water of the nut is always cool and is much more satisfying than the tepid contents of a canteen.

There are three rules that no foreigner dare break if he expects to remain any length of time on the West Coast. He must always wear his helmet between nine-thirty and four-thirty o'clock; he must never drink water unless he is absolutely sure it is free from contamination; finally, he must never neglect to take five grains of quinine every day that he stays on the Coast. The theory of the quinine is that five grains is sufficient to make a prophylaxis against malaria for twenty-four hours. At the end of that time the quinine has been eliminated from the blood; therefore if it is not taken every day one is only protected part of the time. Infection received when there is no protection will give the germs time to develop sufficiently to resist the small dose given twenty-four or thirty-six hours later. The older school of quinine treatment recommended a weekly dose of a much larger quantity of quinine based on

the principle that this would be sufficient to overcome the malaria germs received in the interval. Experience showed this worked sometimes but at other times the development of the fever was rapid enough to incapacitate the person in the interval. At the present, with practically no exceptions, doctors resident on the West Coast advise the daily dose.

After the roads were constructed so that automobiles could be used, a decided improvement came about in the daily life of Monrovia. People were no longer shut in. Two little boys with lanterns, marching ahead and behind the evening visitor, no longer constituted a Liberian taxicab. When the rains poured down, houses were no longer prisons in which people sulked in the gloom and damp. The cars made visiting easy, picnics became a part of our usual entertainments, and on hot nights a ride in the car along the sea road made a welcome change from the stifling rooms.

Running through a bush road at night always has delightful possibilities. Constantly the headlights are reflected back by the eyes of animals and nocturnal birds. Sometimes one gets a glimpse of a deer or antelope; more frequently it is one of the smaller animals and nothing is seen but the light of the eyes. One of the common birds, called a bull-

bat, has a habit of sitting in the road until the car is almost on top of it before flying. The light from these birds' eyes is always red whereas the light from the animals' eyes is usually green. Riding along in the car one is always conscious of the many eyes and of the enormous amount of life on all sides. There is never an opportunity to feel lonely in the Liberian bush. The too rapid growth of plants and vines, the unbelievable quantities of insects, the birds, animals and the restlessness of people are ever present reminders of that wall of living, growing things that presses close on every side. To many foreigners it is not a friendly feeling, but rather a sensation of oppression or antagonism. The heat, the violence of the electrical storms, when one streak of lightning follows another so closely that the sky is a great flame of electric fire for minutes at a time; the irritation of the nose, throat and eyes from the fine impalpable dust of the Harmattan; the constant watchfulness about health and the wearing of a helmet—all these things gradually wear away the nervous poise. Irritability and bad temper only serve to increase the difficulties. White men who cannot get away once in eighteen months or less to go back to the cool mists and the soft rains of a temperate climate do not last very long. Misunderstandings arise easily, jokes are taken seriously and

the bad temper of white residents is proverbial. White women suffer more from West African conditions than men. In the first place the heat and sun, climate, and quinine have a more severe physical effect, and nerves quickly wear close to the breaking point. The fresh clear skin and healthy colour fade to a sallow, dry appearance, and dead looking hair takes the place of the smart fresh coiffure. Young women age to old women after two or three tours. One understands why the English usually leave their wives at home or insist on only short trips to the Coast.

Present-day Liberian life preserves the tradition and custom of open hospitality. There are few hotels in all West Africa, and in Liberia there is only the one at Monrovia. The other towns and cities have never found a hotel necessary. Visitors to the Coast generally have letters of introduction to a trader, foreign consul, or bank manager, and in this way are put up in private houses. When a Liberian goes away from home he visits friends, acquaintances or relatives in the town to which he is going. Everybody in Liberia is glad to have a visitor. Among the foreign residents this is particularly true because after months of daily contact, each knows all of the other's opinions, ideas, stories, lies and adventures. From the expression on the other

man's face you can tell whether it is going to be tale No. seven, or tale No. thirty-two. When it gets to jokes you find yourself considering the penalties for murder and the chances of conviction as your friend starts to repeat the joke you have heard some hundreds of times before from his lips. In a restricted society such as this where the mails come weeks apart, where there is no daily newspaper, rumour and wild tales run riot. A resident learns to hear without surprise the worst possible story or most intimate, if unsavoury, description of the acts of his companions. Even silence under such conditions is regarded with deep suspicion. If one did not hear an evil story about an associate at least once a week, it would be regarded as undoubtedly true that that person was up to something particularly villainous. Nor would it stop there, because in the dearth of conversation, such speculation would be customary and entirely proper from the standpoint of the Coaster. By the time that speculation had been repeated twice, the friend in question would be reported to have just escaped loss of position, arrest for theft or indictment for murder.

The ships on the Coast call at every port; residents and traders go off to attend to business, get ice or cold drinks and hear the news. The captains carry the tales from port to port, so in this way

everyone knows everybody's business or reputed doings along four thousand miles of coast. Men and their family affairs are commonly discussed by people who never saw them, as if they were intimate friends. In the evenings there are three things to do, unless one has a study or a hobby; you may play cards, talk, or drink. The amount of liquor consumed on the West Coast would be a revelation to a bootlegger. The custom of hospitality is, that when a man visits another's house the servant brings, without awaiting orders, Scotch whiskey, soda water, syrups and cigarettes. Cold beer is the special treat to be had when there is ice, but a few years ago ice was only obtained from steamers. Even now but few places have an ice plant.

Life of this sort develops and brings to the surface entirely different traits from those of the temperate zone. In the first place there is no restraint except that of a man's desire. Over long periods the man's efficiency may be examined by the people at home, but if it is, it will be in comparison with his predecessor or with another man in a similar job, in a similar place. Further, every man who goes to the Coast solemnly swears that it is his last trip, that he is leading a dog's life and "never again". He wishes to be "fired". Let them dare, he hints darkly. The actual fact is that ninety per cent of the men

who are on the Coast long to return before they have been away two weeks. The two things that ever sever them from the life are their own physical unfitness or death. No one can foresee the effect of the Coast on a new man. It either makes or breaks each man who comes. Men who fight against the Coast go to pieces more quickly than those who try to adapt themselves to the life there. Yet I have known men who were apparently succeeding for a few years, to go to pieces, neglect their work, come to the office at ten in the morning, all simply through a course of progressive adaptation to climatic conditions and Coast ways. It is easy to forget the traditions and efficiency of the North which render efforts worth while, if one gets too close to the Coast.

CHAPTER XVII

LUX IN TENEBRÆ

LIBERIA had one problem after another to meet and overcome before the future could be faced with any certainty. Most of those earlier difficulties are past. There remains the education of the people. To quote from Mr. Hoover's inaugural address, "Self-government can succeed only through an instructed electorate". If that is true of the United States it is even truer of the Liberian Republic where the percentage of illiteracy is dangerously high.

When public schools supported by the state were starved out of existence, because of lack of funds, there remained only the Mission Schools. They have done the best they could within their limited scope, and I should be reluctant to detract in any way from the real merit and self-sacrifice of their teachers. As a statement of conditions rather than as a criticism of their work, it is opportune to refer

to what has been the system in the past. It would be inaccurate to state that an improvement has already taken place because the new system, to a great extent, is unformed. There has been no trial to demonstrate either its merits or defects. With this in mind the old system need not be gone into very deeply nor the causes of its shortcomings further analyzed.

The colleges that existed were devoted to the classics, theology and law. It is an actual fact that Greek and Hebrew were tàught; but there was never more than a half-hearted attempt to install technical, trade or industrial training. There were a number of sincere, intelligent professors whose pupils in the lines mentioned have been a credit to their efforts. Indeed if there had not been these few educated leaders, who carried on the machinery of government, the Republic could not have endured.

The few schools located in the interior were devoted to religious training, and while some of the children from the native villages received a smattering of the three "R's", it is safe to say that not more than two per cent of the native boys and girls ever received any schooling whatever in these State or Mission institutions. The books used were bought in America and were the usual American editions. It is only within the last few years that a suitable

history of Liberia has been available, but distribution has been confined to only one or two of the schools. No large scale map of Liberia or West Africa was ever used; in fact, as far as Liberia is concerned, no such map has been made to this day. Geography and history, as taught, were the geography and history of other lands.

I was once present in a class room of a school near Monrovia where native children were being taught physiology from an American text book. The day's lesson was the study of diet. These little tribal Africans were being carefully instructed to eat plenty of beefsteak, baked potatoes, good fresh white bread with pure butter, and to drink milk at least three times a day. The utter absurdity of this sort of thing is apparent when one considers that the African tribesman is lucky if he gets a piece of beef to eat once a year; that fresh cow's milk is unknown; that butter comes in tins at a dollar a pound; that white bread, being made of imported flour, is confined to the residents of the Coast; and that white potatoes are imported from the Canary Islands or from Europe at an almost prohibitive price even for foreign residents. I doubt if ninety-five per cent of these children ever saw cow's milk, butter or potatoes in their homes.

Some few schools made half-hearted attempts to

introduce carpentering, printing, and in one instance shoemaking; but with these exceptions, manual or industrial training was conspicuous by its absence. In coast schools the girls were taught dressmaking, but not domestic science.

There are a few masons, carpenters, small boat builders and blacksmiths. These men learned what they know of their trades under the old fashioned system of apprenticeship. It is the custom today for each mason and carpenter to have two or three boys trailing after him, to saw the lumber or mix the mortar in accordance with his marks and directions. Only one of these associates is supposed to be paid by the employer. The others are apprentices learning their trade and presumably supported by their families, who, in most cases, pay some small amount for the training the boy is supposed to receive.

I worked out the question of cost at the regular rates of pay, which at that time was nine shillings a day for a master mason, five shillings for his assistant, and one shilling for a labourer. In addition, he had two apprentices. The work in this case was the building of a perfectly straight brick wall eight feet high, in which cement-mortar was used. I found that I could have saved twenty-five per cent of the labour cost on that job by employing an American mason at fifteen dollars per day with one

assistant at five dollars, if these men had laid brick according to the Union schedule.

This same apparent cheapness, but actual increase in expense of building, is true throughout West Africa. It speaks louder than words of the need for a better system of training.

Three years ago a survey was made of the educational problem, and while the report has been prepared only recently, I had the opportunity of discussing many of its features with the gentlemen who prepared it. One of the accomplished results of this survey is the revision of the primary books so that they shall deal with things Liberian and African. The children will not count that two apples and three apples make five apples, but that two palm nuts and three palm nuts make five palm nuts. They will no longer be carefully instructed as to beefsteak, milk, and potatoes, but as to rice, beans, fish, oil, and cassava. As far as it goes it is thoroughly good.

A plan was suggested for the training of teachers, which recommends that hereafter no one should be allowed to teach who is not properly qualified. This is even more important than the change in the books.

My own thought is that education in Liberia is essentially a different proposition, not only from general education, but from the needs of other parts

of West Africa. In Liberia they must prepare for immediate self-government while in other West Coast countries the colonial administration imposed by some European power will maintain stable government.

In every part of the world there is a natural law operating to divide and apportion the work men do. If this is examined, it is evident that depending on the character of production possible in each place. there must be a fixed relation between the numbers engaged in each occupational division. Thus in a mining district where there are, for example, ten thousand miners, the economic and social balance necessary to prosperity is accomplished by maintaining a proportionate number of men in other occupations. In an agricultural community the farmers require a similar proportionate ratio of ministers, lawyers, doctors, carpenters, machinists and transport men. If this natural balance is artificially disturbed two alternate results are inevitable. When there are too many of the professional class they find it impossible to obtain employment and move to some other place, or remaining, either engage in other work or foment political disorder. Where there are only farmers, the surplus crops rot in the barns for want of a home market or means of transportation to distant markets. In the

first instance, the incentive to study for a profession is lost, while in the latter, the inducement to produce more than the farmer can eat is taken away. It is this maladjustment that has arrested the development of Liberia. For nearly twenty years her schools have turned out only professional men, as the training which would have produced the necessary number of skilled farmers, mechanics, masons and carpenters was ignored. For the same reason, as the original planter colonist died off, the production of coffee and rice was left in the hands of the tribesmen. As roads did not exist, transport from the interior was a matter of human porterage, which limited the distance from which products could be marketed profitably. Country rice was burned for want of transportation, while the Coast bought rice from Europe.

The untrained merchant and middleman, finding it hard to compete with foreign traders, gradually went out of business. Every citizen who was educated was a professional man and not interested in productive labour.

At the present time Liberia needs to remodel the education of her people in a drastic way. The logical proportion between the professional classes and her producers must be restored. Coupled with this must go the establishment of trade and transport. The

roads that have been built are good, in so far as they go, but much remains to be accomplished in their extension and maintenance.

Rural agricultural schools for the native farmer and the development of scientific control of the quality of palm oil, coffee, cocoa, and fibre are immediate necessities. But when the school system is planned there should be a strict limit to the number of pupils that will be given free education in each subject. As education will be given by the state, the state should decide that only a fixed number may receive free education in the professional grades. Parents desiring a classical education for their children could be permitted to pay a high rate of tuition. The same plan should be adopted in all of the industrial and business courses. Pupils failing to pass their examinations should be automatically reclassified into other grades or compelled to pay for further instruction. In this way, in a very few years, the economic and social balance of occupation would be restored. The Republic would find itself no longer compelled to import skilled workers from other countries. Further, there would develop an appreciation of education and opportunity that of itself would be of inestimable benefit.

The education of the interior tribesmen is as important as the education of the resident of the

coast. Today, with the exception of rubber, the export products of Liberia come from the tribes. These exports can be increased, and with that increase, the purchasing power of the whole population is benefited. Prosperity without education is a menace, just as education without economic opportunity is dangerous.

In the interior, the children should be given that agricultural and industrial training which will fit them for their immediate future work. Sanitation is necessary and so is personal hygiene. For the sons of headmen and chiefs—in other words for those boys who are likely to take part in the tribal and interior government—a special school course should be added. This special training should include economics applicable to their environment. It must also include government,—particularly Liberian ideals and relationships,—as these boys will take an active part in bringing personal economic independence to their people. It is through them that the clan economic system will be replaced by that of the citizen, and it is not only right but necessary that they be taught the possibilities of the future.

Liberia's future is not that of a nation of dominant and dependent races. It is a future of equality

of economic opportunity and justice—a land where a negro nation shall demonstrate to other nations the capacity for self-government, liberty and meritorious action.

CHAPTER XVIII

"MAKE WE GO"

THE American visitor finds in the coast towns of Liberia, much that is strangely reminiscent of the southern United States. Broad streets divide the town into a rectangular pattern. Here is Water Street. Down yonder Centre Street cuts across it. There is a Broad Street, and of course, a Main Street. Resting comfortably back from the street and liberally spaced between, are red brick houses with white verandas, which need only live oaks and chinaberry trees instead of palms, to spell home in a far-away land. Many church steeples rise above the house tops, white against the grey African sky, in the familiar style of Sir Christopher Wren, and everywhere there is the soft slurring voice of the old Southland speaking, singing the familiar English tongue. Against this background, the tribesman from the interior, strangely clad or unclad, talking his harsher native dialect, is an exotic figure, an intrusion of something almost alien upon a familiar domestic scene.

Water Street, Monrovia, as the author first saw it.

As roads did not exist, transport from the interior was a matter of human porterage.

No child ever goes homeless in Liberia.

The social life of the town centres about the churches and fraternal orders. Practically all the Liberians are members of some church, and with equal unanimity they respond to the call of the fraternal orders.

Each church has its Circles, Aids and Auxiliaries, which provide a continuous round of entertainments. These are notable affairs because the cooking for which the old South was famous is a living art rather than a memory in Liberia. It is almost worth the journey out there, to attend a church supper.

The Masonic lodges were organized under due authority from England. The Odd Fellows, United Brethren and other similar orders make a strong appeal and reports of their entertainments are frequent items of news in the local papers. The Liberian women take keen interest in organizations affiliated with the lodges. For the youth the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts serve as beginnings from which they will step into the other organizations as they grow older. The Liberian citizen holds strictly aloof from the tribal secret organizations, which demand and enforce both allegiance and obedience. A member of such an organization might well be used as a political cat's paw in later life, and find himself in the difficult position of being a member of a society from which no resignation is possible in this life. Visits

of friends from nearby towns, lawsuits, perfervid politics and open-handed hospitality, all make a far-off picture of life in early days in rural America.

No child ever goes homeless for want of parents or guardians in Liberia. This is a land where the orphan asylum is unknown. In practically every household will be found several children whose parents are dead, who may or may not be related to the family in which they live. Constantly one meets with the story, "Mr. So and So brought me up", or, "He was raised by So and So". It is extraordinary to encounter the casual attitude with which children are taken, clothed, fed and cared for, as if they were in fact sons or daughters of the household, yet who have no claim whatever on their adopted parents.

They are a kindly and courteous people who meet the white foreigner with a tolerant friendliness which is admirable because the foreigner has not always been so considerate of them. Their greatest pleasure is dancing, but the dances they like best are the old-fashioned Virginia reel, the quadrille and the waltz. Their natural sense of rhythm makes the Liberians good dancers. This side of the social life suffers, however, from a lack of anything like adequate music. Pianos are prohibited both by the cost and the humid climate, which quickly racks the piano to pieces. The few which are possessed by wealthy

families are kept in fair condition by oil lamps constantly burning beneath them. Without the means to provide the necessary instruments, musical training is very rare so that the lack of instruments or orchestral music has thrown the people back upon vocal music. Some time ago a band was recruited for the Frontier Force, instruments and a bandmaster were imported, and after some training, this organization has developed very creditably. Its concerts, except for the radio programs received from the United States, provide the only orchestral music the country knows, and it is very much appreciated. The musical development of these people has been cramped between the native music which they despise, and the pipe organs of the churches which are available only for religious purposes.

There are a few newspapers in Liberia, which are published at irregular intervals, as weekly or monthly papers. Unfortunately, there is such a dearth of advertisements and the circulation is so small that none has made a financial success of the effort. Most of these papers are inspired entirely by local politics. The scandalous remarks and vituperation which render them sources of amusement to the average visitor, would have done honour to newspapers of the frontier days in America. Several editors of the local papers are trying to raise the

standard of their publications and every once in a while get out an issue which shows what can be expected when conditions permit the abandonment of political or other propaganda. The intelligence and ability are waiting for an opportunity.

The future of Liberia as a nation can be visioned only from its past efforts. "Judge us by the road we have come rather than by the way we ought to go", one of their officials has said. Not more than ten years ago there were no roads. Today, there are more than two hundred miles of reasonably good gravel road. Automobiles will transport to the coast the products of the interior, and the human porters will be released from their toil, to more lucrative employment. Short-wave wireless stations have brought into immediate communication towns that were formerly weeks apart. Employment has been found at home for most of those who sat idle, or else sought their work in foreign lands, not many years ago. Perhaps the most important accomplishment has been the unofficial assembly, called by the President of the Chiefs of the Tribes. These men have met with the President on but two occasions and this year have been called again. From these informal beginnings, it is to be hoped a permanent native assembly may be accomplished.

I count it my good fortune to have had a part in the development of Liberia in the past few years, to have learned something of the country and its people. Even though in the end, the African climate did its work and I was forced to leave. There was much yet to be done but it was not for me.

One does not easily forget the places where one has worked nor those with whose aid the work has been done, difficulties met, obstacles removed, and who carry on in the remembered places. When I knew that my days on the Coast were rapidly drawing to a close, it was difficult to realize that I was going, not on leave this time but probably for ever.

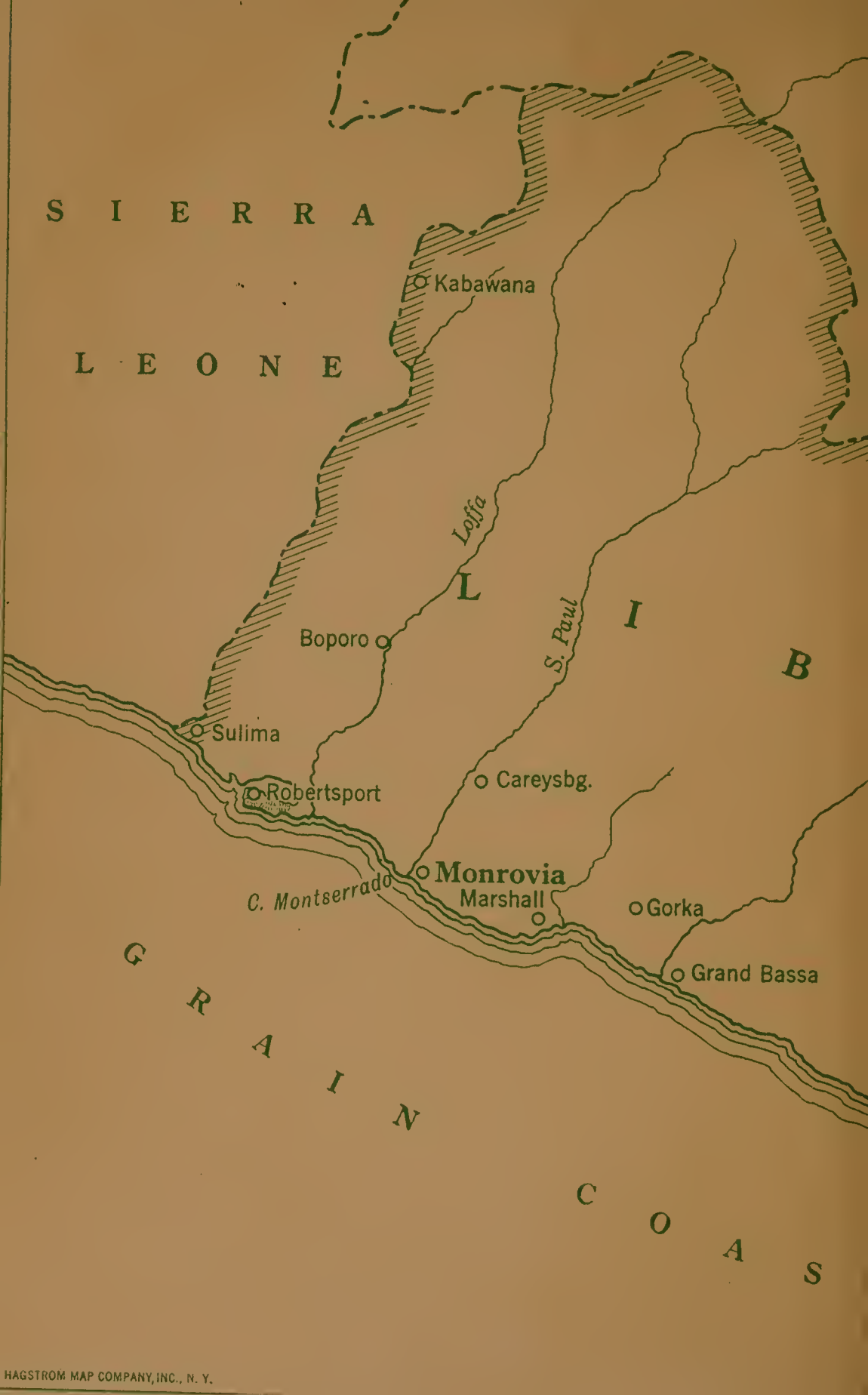
Africa strikes deep.

It so happened that on my last night a full moon shone over the Land of the Five Rivers, bathing the great marsh in all the unreal beauty I loved so well. To me, on the high veranda, came the sound of jazz music played by the Frontier Force Band; over the way the wireless was flickering, the flare of the vacuum tubes sprang up, died down, blazed again in the station below me. On Cape Mesurado wheeled the four searching beams from the lighthouse, swinging out over the sea with its ships and round to the vague mystery of the inland. And as I looked out over the city, from far away, over the grey green jungle, there sounded the heart beat of Africa—the

steady pulsating throb of a drum. Off there in the beyond, in the secret places the pipes of Pan were calling; that plaintive melody which heralds the coming of the old gods. Old, old Africa and the new, and the moonlight over the Five Rivers.

Bare feet pattered on the veranda floor, and my steward's voice called me back:

"Morning time soon, Massah, make we go".



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